

MESSIAH AND EMPEROR:
"SON OF GOD" IN THE INCLUSIO OF MARK 1:10–11 AND 15:38–39

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Abstract

This study challenges the understanding of "Son of God" as a simple title with a static meaning in the Gospel of Mark. Conversely, I argue that Mark gives dynamic development to the Son of God identity through a broad *inclusio* spanning from 1:10–11 to 15:38–39 in order to narrate how Jesus's messianic enthronement effectively deposes the Roman emperor. I examine the contrasting messianic and imperial connotations of Son of God in each of these two passages using a mixture of historical, narrative, and rhetorical-critical methods before finally assessing the effect of this juxtaposition in Mark's narrative as a whole. An emphasis is placed on indications of the author's own intentionality, as well as discerning what would constitute a credible narrative for his first-century audience.

After surveying the scholarship on the issues above in Chapter One, I retrace the historical origins of divine sonship in Mark 1:11 via Psalm 2:7 in Chapter Two. I observe that Psalm 2:7 belongs to a coronation liturgy for the Davidic king, through whose enthronement YHWH will overcome the raging of the nations and kings who oppose him. Chapter Three then demonstrates the messianic interpretation of Psalm 2 and Son of God in the Second Temple period, as well as in Mark 1:10–11. Several early Jewish messianic interpretations of Psalm 2 explicitly polemicize against Rome. Mark himself, I argue, appears to retain Psalm 2's original emphasis on the impending defeat of the rebellious nations while portraying Jesus's baptism as his messianic anointing.

As the counterpart to Chapter Two, Chapter Four explores the meaning of "son of god" per imperial Rome. As the "son of (a) god," the emperor was a supreme ruler of soteriological and eschatological import, whose reign could be termed "gospel." I argue that this narrative so permeated the fabric of the empire that no one living under Roman rule could have missed the probable imperial associations *υἱὸς θεοῦ* would have held for a centurion. Thus, in Chapter Five, I challenge the common views that the centurion's acclamation in Mark 15:39 is either a Christian confession or a sarcastic remark. Instead, I argue that the centurion's claim about Jesus is congruent to the claim these words would have signified about the emperor. Rhetorically, the centurion's acclamation has the effect of depicting Jesus's crucifixion as his enthronement over against the acknowledged ruler of the known world at that time. I conclude that the final pronouncement of Jesus's sonship fulfills the anticipations of the first, such that the entire earthly career of Jesus in Mark is revealed to be the story of how the Messiah takes up his throne and triumphs over every power, earthly and cosmic. Son of God becomes a shorthand for the gospel itself.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentary Series
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago, 1999
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 1961
BNP	<i>Brill's New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i>
EDEJ	<i>Eerdmans' Dictionary of Early Judaism</i>
ER	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
HZAG	<i>Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>

JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JGRChJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JHS	<i>The Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JR	<i>The Journal of Religion</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTI	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LB	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
NIB	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NIBD	<i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCD	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
PAe	Probleme der Ägyptologie
RevExp	<i>Review & Expository</i>
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RNTC	Reading the New Testament Commentary
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity

<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TDNT</i>	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

INTRODUCTION: SONS OF GOD IN CONFLICT

hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, Divi genus, aurea condet
saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva

– Virgil, *The Aeneid* 6:913-915

ἤρξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων ἡ γενέθλιος
ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ [σεβαστοῦ]....

– The Priene Calendar Inscription, 9 BC

קול קורא
במדרג פנו דרך יהנה
ישרו בערבא מסלה לאלהינו
על הרגבה עלי-לה מבשרת ציון
הרימי בפת קולך מבשרת ירושלם הרימי אל-תיראי
אמרי לערי יהודה הנה אלהיכם

– Isaiah 40:3, 9

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ.¹
Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ·
Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου,
ὃς κατασκευάσει τὸν ὁδὸν σου·
φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ·
Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,
εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.

– Mark 1:1-3

If, indeed, it was a "long, hard labor to found the Roman people," as Virgil suggests (*Aen.* 1:42), it was one which the poet invariably declared to have reached its consummation with the coming of Caesar Augustus, the son of the deified Julius. The *Aeneid* itself is a witness to the virtual 'salvation history' that accompanied

1. Some important MSS lack υἱοῦ θεοῦ, though most include these words. Some scholars, such as A. Y. Collins, ("Establishing the Text: Mark 1:1," *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts* [T. Fornberg and D. Hellholm, eds.; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995], 111-27) believe these words to be a later addition to the text; however, I follow the argument posed by Bruce M. Metzger, (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1971], 73) that the omission of these words in some MSS "may be due to an oversight in copying, occasioned by the similarity of the endings of the *nomina sacra*." Thus, I will regard these words as original throughout. Ultimately, however, υἱοῦ θεοῦ is either original to Mark's text, or recognized to be of such importance to Mark's Gospel that they were added by later scribes.

Augustus' designation *divi filius* (θεοῦ υἱός), as are the numerous inscriptions which refer to him as "god," "lord," "savior," the "son of (a) God," and to his birthday as "the beginning of good tidings for the world."² More than one scholar has discussed the similarity in language between the Priene Calendar Inscription above and the first line of the Second Gospel.³ Yet, I cite these documents not in order to suggest a direct relationship between them and the Gospel of Mark, but rather to illuminate a tension present from its beginning. Into a *Sitz im Leben* unquestionably conditioned by the εὐαγγελίων (see above) of Caesar, Mark announces a εὐαγγέλιον itself unquestionably conditioned by the Scriptures of Israel—the prophet Isaiah explicitly.⁴ Thus, the author's cultural and cognitive landscape is inhabited by two conflicting εὐαγγελία, one Roman and one Jewish, each predicated on the arrival of a certain (s)Son of God, one imperial and the other messianic. In other words, whatever Son of God signified in Mark's usage, it was already a title with a *meaning in conflict* in the cultural topography shared between the author and his original, first-century audience. At the same time, however, this is the christological title on which Mark's narrative hinges.⁵

Scholars uniformly maintain that Son of God is Mark's primary christological identity for Jesus.⁶ While Mark's narrative begins on this premise, however, the

2. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 308–11.

3. Most extensively, Craig A. Evans "Mark's Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel," *JGRChJ* 1 (2000): 67–81; see also Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 69–70; M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (1st ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 30; R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 42.

4. Culpepper (*Mark*, 41–42) also recognizes this background/foreground tension surrounding Mark's εὐαγγέλιον.

5. Francis J. Moloney, *Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 48: "The plot of the Gospel of Mark has been devised ... to convey a message about Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God."

6. So Robert C. Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16 (1979): 58; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), *passim*; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 7; William R. Telford, *The Interpretation of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 27; Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 8; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, WBC (Nashville: Word, 2001), lxxii–lxxiii; Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand

narrator does not disclose the full significance of the title all at once, but "leaves room for a surplus of meaning," (to borrow Frank Matera's words), which the ensuing story promises to unveil.⁷ It is not surprising, then, to find that the body of Mark's narrative is essentially framed by two acclamations of Jesus's divine sonship (1:11; 15:39). In actuality, the relationship between these two declarations and the larger unit in which each one occurs (1:10-11; 15:38-39) exemplifies not only the integral position of this title in the Gospel, but also the aforementioned semiotic tension surrounding it in the world of Mark and his readers. The purpose of this study is to investigate Mark's use of "Son of God" in terms of the title's conflicting meaning in the worlds of Judaism and Rome which hangs in the atmosphere between these two passages. With the mention of this topic, I will now briefly survey the history of relevant research, which will demonstrate the basis for this study.

1.1 Literature Review and Justification for this Study

Given the breadth of extant material written on "Son of God" both in general and in relation to Mark's Gospel, this study may initially appear superfluous.

Rapids: Baker, 2008), 41; Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 19; Adam Winn, ("Son of God," *DJG* 890) notes that this conclusion is "based not on the frequency of usage but rather on the manner of usage: the title appears prominently in the narrative's beginning, middle, and end." See also those scholars who view Mark 1:1 as a titular sentence, summarizing the content (and purpose) of the Gospel as a whole, so C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Reprinted with rev. additional supplementary notes. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 34; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 34; Boring, *Mark*, 47–53; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 130.

7. Matera, (*Christology*, 9); idem., ("The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Mark* [ed. W. F. Telford; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995], 290) observes that "As in all good narratives, [Mark] does not reveal everything to the readers at the beginning. The information given in the prologue tells who Jesus is (the Son of God), but does not disclose the full significance of his person through this title." I propose a slight revision of Matera's remarks: the full significance of the title *itself* is not here disclosed. Benoit Standaert, ([PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit te Nijmegen, 1978], 42) similarly argues that the prologue functions as an "avant-jeu," separate from the narrative proper and providing the reader with information unknown to the characters in the story; Morna D. Hooker, *The Message of Mark* (London: Epworth, 1983), 6, likewise maintains that "here Mark is letting us into secrets which remain hidden, throughout most of the story."

Nevertheless, Michael Peppard begins his recent monograph, *Son of God in the Roman World*, by speaking of the death of a metaphor: “the metaphor ‘son of God’—a central expression of ancient Christians—has died for most contemporary interpreters of early Christianity. We think we know what it means.”⁸ The death of this particular metaphor occurred rather quickly, however. In the pre-critical era, the early church overwhelmingly read “Son of God” in Mark and elsewhere in terms of trinitarian theology and/or the divine nature of Christ (i.e., Son of God was understood as an ontological statement equivalent to God the Son).⁹

1.1.1 The Origins of “Son of God” in the Gospel of Mark

Since the advent of critical scholarship, the origins and background of this title have been thoroughly investigated; yet, little attention has been given to Mark’s own development of this title through his narrative. Early on, for instance, the scholars of the history of religions school such as William Wrede, Wilhelm Bousset, and Rudolf Bultmann, sought to locate the background of this title in Hellenistic thought, where such language may refer to heroes, divine-men, or rulers.¹⁰ Bultmann in particular proposed that the background of “Son of God” lay in the θεῖος ἀνὴρ (“divine-man”) concept as delineated by Ludwig Beiler.¹¹ In difference

8. Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

9. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 270; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989), 12–13; Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Mark*, ACCS 2 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 11; Terrence L. Donaldson, “Son of God,” *NIDB* 335; Peppard, *Son of God*, 3; e.g., Hippolytus, *The Discourse on the Holy Theophany*, 106 (ANF 5:236); Gregory Thaumaturgus, *The Fourth Homily, On the Holy Theophany or Of Christ’s Baptism* (ANF 6:70–71); Augustine, *Letter 169, to Euodius* (FC 30:34–35); idem., *Questions*, Question 43 (FC 70:74–75); Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith* 1.10.67 (NPNF² 10:212). This pre-critical understanding remains by-and-large the uncritical view today, as well as the typical view in treatments by systematic theologians—see the discussion by D. A. Carson, *Jesus the Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 14–15.

10. Cullmann, *Christology*, 270–272; Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: the Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 23–29; Dunn, *Christology*, 14; Jarl Fossum, “Son of God,” *ABD* 6:128–134.129; Broadhead, 116–117; Donaldson, “Son of God” 5:336; Winn, “Son of God” 886.

11. According to Beiler, the θεῖος ἀνὴρ is characterized by astonishing wisdom and the ability to perform mighty acts: see Ludwig Beiler, *Theios Aner: Das Bild des “Göttlichen Menschen” in Spätantike*

from this view, however, the “corrective christology” camp has argued that the Son of God title is linked to the divine-man christology of Mark’s *opponents*, which the author himself seeks to counter through his portrait of Jesus’ suffering, embodied by “Son of Man.”¹² As Norman Perrin states, “Mark utilizes the title Son of Man to “interpret and to give a correct content to the belief in Jesus as Son of God.”¹³ Yet, contemporary scholarship has abandoned both of these views. In the first place, θεῖος ἀνὴρ does not appear ever to have been a fixed or even clearly-defined concept in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁴ Additionally, most scholars today follow Kingsbury’s argument that Son of Man tends to reinforce, rather than contradict, the use of Son of God throughout the course of Mark’s narrative (especially in 14:61–62).¹⁵

Scholars in the wake of the corrective view tended to locate the background of “Son of God” not in Hellenism, but in the Old Testament Scriptures and early Judaism—a view that now represents the consensus.¹⁶ While divine sonship in the

und Frühchristentum, 2 vols. (Vienna: Höfels, 1935); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 130–33. For Bultmann, not unlike Wrede and Bousset before him, Jesus’s baptism in Mark is the moment when he was adopted as Son of God and so transformed from a mere mortal into a supernatural being by the substance of the Spirit (1:9–11): see William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. by Greig J. C. G. (London: James Clarke & Co., 1971), 73–74; 225; Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

12. For good summaries of this position, see Kingsbury, *Christology*, 25–31; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1989), xxxix; Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 71.

13. Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 51–57; Norman Perrin “The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology,” *JR* (1971): 173–87; other representatives of this camp include Johannes Schreiber “Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums: Beobachtungen zur Theologie und Komposition des zweiten Evangeliums,” *ZTK* (1961): 158; Ulrich Luz “Das Geheimnismotiv und die markinische Christologie,” *ZNW* 56/1–2 (1965): 28–30; Ludger Schenke, *Die Wundererzählungen des Markusevangeliums* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974), 393–95; Theodore J. Weeden “The Heresy That Necessitated Mark’s Gospel,” *ZNW* 59/3–4 (1968): 145–58; Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Bedeutung der Wundererzählungen für die Christologie des Markusevangeliums* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975); Ralph P. Martin, *Mark* (Atlanta: Knox, 1982), 156–62.

14. Carl R. Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism* (SBLDS 40; Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 237.

15. Kingsbury, *Christology*, 33–42; cf. Guelich, *Mark*, xl; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 77; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 117; Winn, *Purpose*, 13.

16. Even in the earlier period, some scholars already argued that the background of Son of God was “thoroughly Jewish”: so Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 53; see also Cullmann, *Christology*, 272–75; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 1:90–91; C. F. D. Moule, *The*

OT variously refers to angelic beings (Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25; Pss 29:1; 89:6; 82:6), Israel (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; 32:5, 19; Isa 43:6; 45:11; Jer 31:9; Hos 2:1; 11:1), or the Davidic king (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13–14; 22:10; 28:67; Pss 2:7; 89:26–37), the king is the only individual entity to whom such terminology is applied.¹⁷ Accordingly, most interpreters today read Mark's use of divine sonship language in association with the royal connotations of Davidic kingship. This is especially true of the baptism scene from 1:9–11, which is commonly interpreted as an enthronement scene after the fashion of Psalm 2 from which the sonship language here is directly borrowed.¹⁸

Despite this general agreement, however, scholars of previous generations tended to doubt whether the title was ever used for the Messiah and, likewise, whether it should be read messianically in Mark (the work of Martin Hengel and C.

Origin of Christology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 28; Vincent Taylor, (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [2nd ed. ed. New York: Macmillan St. Martin's, 1966], 120–21) ultimately argues for a "unique" meaning of Son of God in Mark, but nevertheless maintains that the background of the title is predominantly Jewish; Ferdinand Hahn, (*The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* [New York: World, 1969], 298) holds the Son of God title to be messianic, but also believes that the Hellenistic concept of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ had been adopted previously by Judaism (a position no longer maintained today). More recently, however, the Jewish origin this title in the NT has been maintained by Hans-Jörg Steichele, *Der leidende Sohn Gottes* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1980), *passim*; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 37; Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 80; idem., *Mark* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 29; idem., *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 99–103; Dunn, *Christology*, 15, 35–36; Guelich, *Mark*, 32; Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 10–11; idem., *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 289; Marcus, *Way*, 7, 48–49, 69–72; Marcus, *Mark* 1–8, 70, 162; Pheme Perkins, *Mark* (NIB 8; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 527–28, 535; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 649; William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 113, 142; Broadhead, *Naming*, 117; William R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Evans, *Mark* 8:27–16:20, lxxi–lxxii; France, *Mark*, 77; Robert D. Rowe, *God's Kingdom and God's Son: The Background in Mark's Christology from Concepts of Kingship in the Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Winn, *Purpose*, 18; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65–66, 150; Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 128, 209; Stein, *Mark*, 58–59; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 38–49; Winn, "Son of God" 886.

17. Cullman, *Christology*, 273; Hengel, *Son of God*, 21–23; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 36; Dunn, *Christology*, 15; Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128–29; Broadhead, *Naming*, 117–18; Donaldson, "Son of God" 5:336; Winn, "Son of God" 886.

18. Cullmann, *Christology*, 273; Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ*, 33; idem. *Christology*, 69–70; Fossum 6:134; Juel, *Master*, 99; Perkins, *Mark*, 528; Gathercole, *Christology*, 274; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65–66; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 127–28, 209. The particulars of the enthronement motif (including adoptionist and non-adoptionist categories) will be discussed in chapter 3.

F. D. Moule notwithstanding).¹⁹ More recently, however, this trend has seen a reversal in light of the discovery that the OT passages noted above were interpreted messianically during the Second Temple period (see Pss. Sol. 17:23–24; 1 En. 48:10; 105:2; 4 Ezra 7:28; 13:35) and especially the discovery of certain Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q174 1:10–12; 4Q246 2:1; 4Q252 5:1–4) that explicitly connect the designation Son of God with the Messiah.²⁰ Adela Yarbro Collins, for example, observes that Pss. Sol. 17:21–24 specifically reads Psalm 2:7 messianically: "In the Gospel of Mark, therefore, the divine voice suggests to an audience familiar with the messianic reading of Psalm 2, that Jesus is the royal messiah or the Messiah of Israel."²¹ Nevertheless, this position is not a unanimously held one. Joseph Fitzmyer cautions that no direct evidence has yet been provided linking "Son of God" to "Messiah" in the Dead Sea Scrolls or elsewhere in pre-Christian Judaism.²² In the opinion of most scholars, however, Fitzmyer has set the burden of proof unreasonably high. John J. Collins, for instance, responds that "son of God" in 4Q246 is applied to a figure whom Fitzmyer himself recognizes as a future Davidic king; thus, Collins finds it curious that he stops short of connecting this title with the Messiah.²³ Others, meanwhile, are concerned to say that Mark denotes more than "Messiah" by his use of Son of

19. For instance, Cranfield, (*Mark*, 55) argues that evidence supporting the use of Son of God as a messianic title is scanty; Cullmann, (*Christology*, 274–75) affirms the possibility, but cautiously refrains from any definite statement; see Hengel, (*Son of God*, 42–44); Moule, (*Christology*, 28) for early arguments in favor of a messianic reading; cf. Hahn, (*Titles*, 298) who also believed Son of God was a designation for the Messiah, though he believed the Jewish concept itself had been infiltrated by Hellenistic ideas. Additionally, Kingsbury, (*Jesus Christ*, 33; idem. *Christology*, 63, 69–70, 98, 118) makes a compelling case that Mark equates Son of God and Messiah throughout his narrative, beginning with the apposition of the titles $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$ and $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ in 1:1.

20. So Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Liber Läromedel / Gleerup, 1976), 261–62; Dunn, *Christology*, 15; Juel, *Messianic*, 80; idem., *Master*, 99, 102; Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 69–72; Horbury, 113; Wright, *JVG*, 649; Hurtado, *Lord*, 289; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65–66, 209; Winn, *Purpose*, 18; idem., "Son of God" 886, 890; Sam Janse, "You are My Son": *The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 53; Aquila H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus' Self-Consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 28; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 38–39, 49.

21. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65.

22. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 105–06; idem., *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 106–07; see also Broadhead, (*Naming*, 120) maintaining a similar conclusion.

23. A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 71 n. 105.

God.²⁴ Richard France and Robert Stein both, for instance, emphasize the unique filial relationship connoted by this title over against any possible royal or messianic associations.²⁵ Both France and Stein must downplay the clear context of Psalm 2 quoted in Mark 1:11, as well as the likely use of *χριστοῦ* as a messianic title in apposition with *υἱοῦ θεοῦ* in 1:1 in order to maintain this interpretation, however. Thus, I follow the widespread agreement represented by Adam Winn's summary: "As God's son, Jesus is God's messiah and king, who will rule over not only the people of Israel but also the entire world. For Mark, Jesus' messianic kingship appears to be the basis for his identity as 'Son of God.'"²⁶

1.1.2 The Markan "Son of God" and the Roman Imperial Cult

Yet, to stop here is perhaps to tell only half of the story. Simply put, inasmuch as Mark's terminology issues forth from a Jewish background, so also he speaks into the foreground of the Roman Empire.²⁷ Winn arrives at a similar conclusion: the "Jewish scriptures may be the primary background for Mark's use of 'son of God,' [but] the Greco-Roman background should not be ignored."²⁸ For instance, while the declaration *σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπήτός* spoken by the voice from heaven in Mark 1:11 clearly bears messianic associations, one ought not assume that the same associations hold true of the Roman centurion's statement *ἀλήθως οὕτως ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν* in 15:39. Scholars have long been aware that the title *divi filius*, normally translated into Greek as *θεοῦ υἱός*, was a regular title of

24. So already, V. Taylor (*Mark*, 120–21) who argues for a unique meaning of Son of God in Mark, suggesting that the concept of the Messiah must be stretched to fit here; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, (*The Gospel According to Luke* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1981], 206) himself exhibits such a concern in relation to Luke's Gospel.

25. France, *Mark*, 50, 77, 82–83; Stein, *Mark*, 41, 58–59. To a lesser extent, see also Guelich, *Mark*, 32–34.

26. Winn, "Son of God" 890.

27. As A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, xiv) aptly observe, "The Jewish context, even where Semitic languages were spoken, was itself part of the Greco-Roman world, and influenced by Hellenistic culture in various ways. The old antithesis of Judaism and Hellenism cannot be maintained."

28. Winn, *Purpose*, 101.

Caesar Augustus.²⁹ Subsequent emperors, including Tiberius and Nero, used variations of the title.³⁰ Yet, relatively few commentators have taken up the question of how Mark's title might have been used and heard by an audience located within the Roman empire until recently.³¹

Peppard's recent work investigates the associations between the Son of God title in the New Testament and the Roman emperor, correctly noting that the emperor was "the most famous 'son of god' in the Roman world."³² He offers a unique perspective on Jesus's baptism in 1:9–11, where he considers the possibility that the image of the "dove" may be a Roman adoption symbol intended to portray Jesus as a counter-emperor.³³ In regards to Mark 15:39, Peppard notes that scholars have offered many responses to the question of why Mark highlights the declaration of a Roman centurion specifically. His own suggestion is, once again, that Jesus is portrayed as a counter-emperor through the appellation of υἱὸς θεοῦ.³⁴ His claims regarding "Son of God" in Mark, then, are not dissimilar from those of Evans and Winn, both of whom argue that "Son of God" is a central feature in a deliberate attempt by Mark to narrate the story of Jesus in opposition to the emperor and imperial cult.³⁵

29. Cullmann, *Christology*, 272; Hengel, *Son of God*, 30; Dunn, *Christology*, 14; Simon Price, "Gods and Emperors: the Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult," *JHS* 104 (1984): 79–95; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 767–68; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 52.

30. Tae Hun Kim, "The Anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ in Mark 15,39 and the Roman Imperial Cult," *Biblia* 79/2 (1998): 225–38; Winn, *Purpose*, 102.

31. T. H. Kim, "Anarthrous": 221–41; Evans, "Mark's Incipit"; Evans, *Mark*, 510; Adela Yarbro Collins "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God Among Greeks and Romans," *HTR* 93/02 (2000); A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 75; 764–69; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 48–53; Winn, *Purpose*, *passim*, but especially 101–02, 180–81; Peppard, *Son of God*, *passim*. Additionally, Boring, (*Mark: A Commentary*, 30) notes a degree of anti-imperial critique associated with Mark's use of the Son of God title, but neither questions what might be signified by the title as spoken by the Roman centurion in 15:39. Bird, (*Jesus*, 52) however, has recently the incredible irony of a Roman centurion attributing to Jesus a title normally reserved for the emperor.

32. Peppard, *Son of God*, 4.

33. Peppard, *Son of God*, 87. Although Peppard's argument regarding Mark is an intriguing one, I find it too conjectural to cast my agreement with at this time; thus, I will not utilize his arguments in this thesis.

34. Peppard, *Son of God*, 130–31.

35. Evans, "Incipit," *passim*; Winn, *Purpose*, 180–83.

According to Winn, the very purpose of Mark's Gospel is in fact to pit "Jesus's impressive résumé against that of the current Roman emperor Vespasian" in order "to respond to Flavian propaganda that has created a crisis within the church in Rome."³⁶ Winn's thesis is dependent on both a Roman audience and a post-70 AD dating of Mark, neither of which are at all agreed upon by scholars.³⁷ Nevertheless, his insights regarding the ubiquitous nature of "son of God" in the Roman imperial cult, and the likely connection between the imperial cult and the centurion's statement in 15:39 are noteworthy.³⁸

Collins also links the centurion's words to the Roman imperial cult, noting that the atypical lack of articles in 15:39 (see also 1:1) recalls the characteristically anarthrous imperial title, θεοῦ υἱός.³⁹ She concludes that "Those members of the audiences of Mark familiar with the imperial cult would understand that the centurion recognized Jesus, rather than the emperor, as the true ruler of the world."⁴⁰ I am in basic agreement with this conclusion, with one slight modification owing to the work of Tae Hun Kim. Kim presents convincing evidence that the precise title θεοῦ υἱός was only ever used by Augustus himself (later emperors took variations of his title); thus, the centurion's acclamation in Mark 15:39 may specifically call to mind the portrait of Augustus himself: the first and the most revered of the emperors.⁴¹

36. Winn, *Purpose*, 201.

37. See Appendix A: The Authorship, Provenance, and Dating of Mark for my own assessment of these matters. In brief, I support Markan authorship from Rome in the mid to late 60s, though my thesis is not at all dependent on any particular date or place of writing.

38. Peppard, *Son of God*, 101–02.

39. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 768; so already Kim, ("Anarthrous": 222) "anarthrous υἱός θεοῦ in Mark 15,39 is a title thoroughly consistent with the background of the Roman imperial cult and, in particular, that of Augustus." As Collins also notes, some ancient manuscripts (D 565 ff2 i k q) "form the imperial title" by reversing υἱός θεοῦ. The existence of this variant, while not original to the text, may suggest that some early interpreters read the centurion's words in this fashion.

40. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 768; as similarly maintained by P. H. Bligh "A Note on Huios Theou in Mark 15:39," *ExpTim* 80 (1968): 53; and more recently Evans, *Mark*, 510.

41. Kim, "Anarthrous": 225–38. The implications of the conclusion above, and Kim's refinement, will be explored in a later chapter of this thesis.

Meanwhile, before arriving at her conclusion, Collins aptly observes the interpretive friction surrounding Mark's use of "Son of God" at this point. If, on the one hand, priority is given to Mark's own narrative, wherein "Son of God" most readily refers to Israel's Messiah (as noted above), the centurion could appear to be recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. This course appears to be the route taken by most interpreters, who read either this meaning or a full-blown Christian confession into the centurion's statement.⁴² On the other hand, historical, cultural, and social considerations lead one to Collins's own conclusion, stated above.⁴³ There is, then, an implicit tension apparent in Mark's narration of the "Son of God" title mirroring the conflict already present between the claims of the Jewish Messiah and the Roman emperor.

Yet, despite the fact that each of the authors noted in this section recognizes the disparity between the centurion's declaration and the more general messianic background of "Son of God," in Mark, even these seem to stop short of examining what the full force of this title in Mark's narrative might be in light of *both* the messianic associations stemming from its Jewish background *and* the associations with the imperial cult present in the Greco-Roman foreground of the Gospel.⁴⁴ This

42. For instance, most commentators never ask what might be the background of υἱὸς θεοῦ in 15:39. The tendency is rather to establish the background of "Son of God" early and maintain a static understanding throughout. See for example Cranfield, *Mark*, 460; V. Taylor, *Mark*, 597; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 576; Juel, *Master*, 103; idem., *Mark*, 227–28; Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ*, 37; idem., *Christology*, 118; Robert Horton Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 4; Perkins, *Mark*, 724; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Christology of Mark's Gospel: Narrative Christology and the Markan Jesus," in *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology* (eds. J. D. Kingsbury, M. A. Powell, and D. R. Bauer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 41; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 36; France, *Mark*, 49; Hurtado, *Lord*, 289; Boring, *Mark*, 432; Stein, *Mark*, 718–19; Marcus, *Mark 9–16*, 1058.

43. See the discussion in A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 767.

44. Evans, (*Mark*, 510) is one notable exception. Evans notably maintains that "Impressed by the manner of Jesus' death and the signs that attend it, the Roman centurion confesses of Jesus what he should only confess of the Roman emperor. Caesar is not the 'son of God'; Jesus, the crucified Messiah, is." In Evans' view, "the centurion has switched allegiance" from the emperor to the Messiah. This claim will be examined in due course. For now, I simply note that while Evans' comments here are particularly insightful, he takes them no further.

state of affairs is all the more striking since several scholars have already observed the overlap between the Jewish and Greco-Roman uses of divine sonship language: an overlap in which the specific point of contact is that of a divinely appointed world-ruler.⁴⁵

1.1.3 The Rhetorical Relationship between Mark 1:10–11 and 15:38–39

The rhetorical structure of Mark's Gospel provides good reason to examine his use of the Son of God title precisely in terms of an implicit tension between Israel's Messiah and Roman emperor. Markan scholarship has uniformly recognized a close association between Mark's narrations of Jesus's baptism in 1:10–11 and his crucifixion in 15:38–39 based on multiple parallel features in the two passages.⁴⁶ Several scholars have gone one step further by observing that these two passages in fact form an *inclusio* which serves to encapsulate the body of Mark's narrative.⁴⁷ When coupled with the observations noted in the preceding section, the presence of such an *inclusio* would suggest that Mark frames his Gospel between two juxtaposed

45. Dunn, *Christology*, 16; Juel, *Mark*, 29; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, 141; cf. Donaldson, ("Son of God" 5:336) also notes "a certain duality" in the meaning of "Son of God" in Mark. Although Donaldson specifically refers to a duality between the known and unknown identity of Jesus, his comment nevertheless suggests the Mark's use of this title is likely dynamic rather than static; Winn, (*Purpose*, 101–02, 180–81) also implies as much.

46. Eduard Schweizer, *Good News According to Mark* (Westminster John Knox, 1999), 358; Lane, *Mark*, 576; Ernest Best, *Mark: the Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 132–33; M. Philip Scott "Chiastic Structure: A Key to the Interpretation of Mark's Gospel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 15/1 (1985), 18; Howard M. Jackson "The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross," *NTS* 33/01 (1987): 23, 27, 31; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 175–76; Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 7; idem., *Mark 1–8*, 163–64; Gundry, *Apology*, 48; Johannes Heidler, "Die Verwendung von Psalm 22 im Kreuzigungsbericht des Markus. Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Christologie des Markus," in *Christi Leidenspsalm: Arbeiten zum 22. Psalm; Gestchrift zum 50. Jahr des Bestehens des Theologischen Seminars "Paulinum" Berlin* (ed. H. Genest; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1996), 26–34; Matera, *Christology*, 8; Whitney T. Shiner "The Ambiguous Pronouncement of the Centurion and the Shrouding of Meaning in Mark," *JSNT* 22/78 (2000): 20; Edwards, *Mark*, 36; France, *Mark*, 49, 77; Boring, *Mark*, 45, 432, 434; Stein, *Mark*, 56 notes the parallel features between 1:10 and 15:38, but on 719 finds an analogy between 1:11 and 15:38 unconvincing because the circumstances are not strictly identical.

47. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 187 n. 93; Stephen Motyer "The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?" *NTS* 33/1 (1987): 155–57; Juel, *Mark*, 225; idem., *Master*, 34; David Ulansey "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic Inclusio," *JBL* 110/1 (1991): 123–25; Evans, *Mark*, 509 (in support of Ulansey's argument); A. B. Caneday "Christ's Baptism and Crucifixion: The Anointing and Enthronement of God's Son," *SBIT* 83 (2004): 70–85; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762.

statements of Jesus's sonship with conflicting connotations. Before proceeding further, however, it will be helpful to observe the various rhetorical structures of Mark's Gospel that have been proposed in relation to these two passages.

Despite the once commonly held opinion represented by Bultmann's statement that Mark "was not sufficiently master of his material," contemporary scholarship has affirmed that while Mark's rhetoric is somewhat rudimentary, he is "rhetorically sensitive and has rhetorical purposes."⁴⁸ Several studies from the 1940s to the present have further demonstrated that a) Mark 1:11 and 15:39 contain some of the clearest evidence of Mark's rhetorical purposes, and b) those purposes are particularly concentrated around Jesus' divine sonship.⁴⁹ Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that a number of the proposed rhetorical structures of Mark have located either a concentric or chiasmic relationship between Mark 1:10–11 and 15:38–39.⁵⁰ While the specifics of their proposals differ, both Philip Scott and Ched Myers, for instance, argue that a chiasmus consisting of the declarations of Jesus's divine sonship at his baptism (1:11), transfiguration (9:7), and crucifixion (15:39) lies at the heart of Mark's structure.⁵¹ Such proposals gain further support from those scholars

48. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1963), 350; Witherington, *Mark*, 11; see also Marcus, (*Mark 1–8*, 60) in recognition of Mark's rhetorical sensitivity. Also see Telford, (*The Interpretation of Mark*, 1): Mark's Gospel was formerly considered "unsophisticated and untheological."

49. So Walter E. Bundy "Dogma and Drama in the Gospel of Mark," *NTS* (1942): 70–94; Morton S. Enslin "The Artistry of Mark," *JBL* (1947): 385–99, both observing that since the voice from heaven is only heard by Jesus himself (unlike in Matthew), these words are particularly rhetorically directed at the reader. See also Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 17 to the same point. More recently, Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple: the Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Atlanta: Scholar's, 1977), 188; Malbon, "The Christology of Mark's Gospel: Narrative Christology and the Markan Jesus," 41; Marcus, *Mark* 9–16, 1058; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 769; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 133; Geoff R. Webb, *Mark at the Threshold Applying Bakhtinian Categories to Markan Characterisation* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 182; and Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 39 have all observed the rhetorically directed dramatic irony at work in the centurion's confession (15:39).

50. Standaert, "Marc," 42; Augustine Stock, *Call to Discipleship: A Literary Study of Mark's Gospel* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 26; Bas van Iersel "Locality, Structure, and Meaning in Mark," *LB* 53 (1983): 45–54 were among the first to propose macro-level chiasmic or concentric arrangements as the key to Mark's structure. While these early proposals do not highlight a specific relationship between 1:10–11 and 15:38–39, they paved the way for future proposals that do.

51. Scott, "Chiasmic": 18–19; Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: a Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Twentieth anniversary ed. ed. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 390–91; cf. Witherington, *Mark*, 39, who

who have observed that the narrative turns on declarations of Jesus's sonship at precisely the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative.⁵²

Yet, while there is an increasing consensus that the narrative is carefully structured, there has been little agreement about the structure itself.⁵³ Moreover, some scholars, such as Joanna Dewey, have questioned the legitimacy of such elaborate structures as those noted above.⁵⁴ I share Dewey's concern about such all-encompassing proposals, especially in light of the lack of agreement regarding any particular macro-structure. Even so, Mark would seem to have a penchant for the broad category of rhetorical devices inclusive of chiasmus, concentric arrangement, and inclusio.⁵⁵ Much to the same point, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon helpfully characterizes Mark's rhetoric as

... one of juxtaposition—placing scene over against scene in order to elicit comparison, contrast, and insight. This juxtaposition includes repetition, not only of scenes, but also of words and phrases: duality is widespread.... In addition, juxtaposition includes foreshadowing and echoing of words, phrases, and whole events.⁵⁶

Juxtaposition, including the repetition of words, phrases, and scenes, is a fitting description of the relationship between Mark 1:10–11 and 15:38–39.

finds Myers suggested framework convincing.

52. Hooker, *The Gospel of Mark*, 175–76; Matera, *Christology*, 8; Fowler, *Reader*, 20–21.

53. Robert L. Humphrey, *Narrative Structure and Message in Mark: A Rhetorical Analysis*, SBEC 60 (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 2003), 5; Caneday, "Baptism": 70. Caneday notes that "the complexity of Mark's narrative arrangement yields numerous, if not competing, interpretive structural arrangements of several chiasms within a large chiasm."

54. Joanna Dewey "The Gospel of Mark as an Oral-Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation," JSNTSup (1994): 147–48.

55. Dewey has argued (see previous note above) that Mark bears the character of an oral narrative. Meanwhile, in her earlier work, Joanna Dewey "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 33–39 states that Oral narrative, 'operates on the acoustic principle of the echo.' Ring composition (*inclusio*) is endemic in oral narrative, marking the boundaries of individual episodes and of much longer sections....individual episodes and clusters of episodes are narrated in balanced patterns in either parallel or chiastic order. Such observations, if applied to Mark, strongly support the possibility of some sort a rhetorical parallel between 1:10–11 and 15:38–39. See also Humphrey, 12, 22 on Mark's regular use of "framing episodes" or "inclusions."

56. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?" in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (eds. J. C. Anderson and S. D. Moore; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 34.

In this vein, David Ulansey and A. B. Caneday both observe that these two scenes serve as ideal counterpoints to one another since they constitute the precise beginning and end of the earthly career of Jesus.⁵⁷ Additionally, the two passages share a common reference to 'rending' (of the heavens in 1:10, and of the temple veil in 15:38) marked by the only two uses of σκίζειν in Mark's Gospel, closely followed by a declaration of Jesus's divine sonship in each instance.⁵⁸ As multiple scholars have observed, the appearance of σκίζομένου, rather than a form of ἀνοίγειν, with τοῦς οὐρανοῦς, is strikingly atypical. While ἀνοίγειν is frequently used in relation to the heavens in the Septuagint and Second Temple literature (Gen 7:11; Ps 77:23 LXX; Isa 24:18; Ezek 1:1; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 4:1; 11:19; 19:11; T. Levi 2:6; 5:1; 18:6; T. Jud. 24:2), σκίζειν is so used only once (Jos. Asen. 14:2).⁵⁹ Moreover, although all three Synoptic accounts use this verb to describe the rending of the temple veil (cf. Matt 27:51; Luke 23:45), Mark alone employs it in his account of Jesus's baptism. As Collins also maintains, then, the use of σκίζειν in 1:10 is likely a deliberate move by Mark intended to form an *inclusio* with Jesus's crucifixion.⁶⁰ In contrast to the various chiasmic structures above, the suggested *inclusio* between 1:10–11/15:38–39 exhibits more numerous and significant parallels.

Yet, while the various chiasmic proposals typically stress the recurrent declarations of Jesus's sonship, those scholars who suggest the *inclusio*, by contrast, usually emphasize the mutual rending of the heavens and temple veil to the near or total neglect of the two declarations of Jesus's divine sonship. Rather than inquiring into the rhetorical effect of these juxtaposed pronouncements, many scholars only

57. Ulansey, "Heavenly Veil": 123; Caneday, "Baptism": 70.

58. Motyer: 155; and Caneday, "Baptism": 72 both note additional parallels, including the descent of the Spirit and the descent of the tear in the temple veil and the presence of the cognate terms πνεῦμα (1:10) and ἐξέπνευσεν (15:39); however, I have limited the discussion above to the most unquestionable and pertinent features.

59. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1:90–91; Guelich, *Mark*, 32; Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 49; France, *Mark*, 77; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762; Stein, *Mark*, 56.

60. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762; see also France, 77.

discuss the mutual references to Jesus's sonship as a matter of secondary importance: supporting evidence for the *inclusio*.⁶¹ This predilection is somewhat understandable in view of the fact that the single most striking parallel between these two passages is the use of *σχιζειν* itself. Even so, the earlier studies noted above have already demonstrated that these declarations of Jesus's divine sonship are near to the heart of Mark's rhetorical aims, just as Son of God is widely recognized as Mark's most important christological title. Finally, if *σχιζειν* is the most striking marker of the *inclusio*, the emphasis in each scene arguably falls on the declarations of divine sonship (a point that will be elaborated upon in due course). There are strong reasons, therefore, to suppose that the primary statement of the *inclusio* is located in the relationship between these two pronouncements of Jesus's sonship.

Perhaps a further, underlying reason for the lack of attention paid to the juxtaposition of these two statements, however, is the fact that Markan scholarship has generally assumed a consistent, static meaning of "Son of God" throughout this Gospel rather than a dynamic, narrative one. From this perspective, there would appear to be no occasion for the comparison. With the notable exceptions of Evans and A. Y. Collins, those scholars who observe this *inclusio* have not overlapped with those who recognize the dual context of "Son of God" in Mark. Yet, even these two scholars do not engage in the type of narrative reading necessary to investigate the complex tension surrounding Mark's use of this title in this *inclusio*.

In summary, contemporary scholarship is generally agreed that Son of God functions primarily as a messianic title for Mark (especially in 1:11); yet, a number of scholars have recognized that in 15:39, by contrast, *υἱὸς θεοῦ* more naturally bears imperial connotations. The semantic contrast involved in these two

61. For example Motyer: 155; Juel, *Mark*, 225 (to a lesser extent); Ulansey, "Heavenly Veil": 123–25; seemingly also A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762.

pronouncements is highlighted all the more by the vivid parallelism between Mark 1:10–11 and 15:38–39. More than one rhetorical relationship has been proposed to account for these parallels, but the strongest arguments favor an *inclusio*. While most scholars who argue for the *inclusio* stress the parallel renderings of the heavens and Temple veil, however, the thematic prominence of Son of God in Mark's Gospel suggests that the juxtaposition of the two declarations in 1:11 and 15:39 may be more central to Mark's rhetoric aims than the mutual rendering language. That is to say, the juxtaposition of a messianic use of Son of God with an imperial one may lie close to the heart of Mark's aims.

1.2 Interpretive Method

In order to apprehend Mark's own development of "Son of God," this study will adopt an essentially narrative methodology, while also giving due consideration to the insights of historical-critical studies. Thus, I follow Joel Marcus in seeking to avoid a "unilateral concentration" on one method.⁶² All the same, the animating conviction of this study is that "Stories written as stories are probably meant to be read as such"—and, as a corollary, that the identity of Jesus is revealed primarily "by means of the story told about him."⁶³ As such, the argument to follow will proceed on the basic premises that a) the meaning of Son of God must be investigated with

62. Marcus, *Way*, 8; see also Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 61: no single approach constitutes a sufficient methodology for the study of the New Testament.

63. Following C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: the Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 15; and Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 133 respectively; see also Hans W. Frei, "Literal Reading," in *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (ed. F. D. McConnell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 46: "the story of Jesus is above all about ... his identification through narrative descriptions...." To Rowe's point, James M. Robinson, "The Gospels as Narrative," in *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (ed. F. D. McConnell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 97–98 maintains that "The emergence of narrative Gospels is not to be taken as a matter of course"; the very uniqueness of their narrative-biographical form in comparison to the rest of the New Testament and early Jewish literature demands attention to that form.

attention to Mark as a unified whole; and b) meaning is inseparable from narrative shape.⁶⁴

On a theoretical level, this is to engage the concept of narrative identity, which understands identity to be revealed neither through a person's speech, nor his or her actions, but ultimately through the story of which these are already a part. In the words of Hannah Arendt, "*Who* somebody is or was we can only know by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero—his biography, in other words."⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur describes the nature of narrative identity in terms of a dialect between selfhood and sameness: narrative facilitates the integration via "emplotment" of what seems contrary to "sameness-identity, namely diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability."⁶⁶ Identity is ultimately developed by way of this dynamic between established and contrasting features up until the close of the story.⁶⁷ In slight contrast to Ricoeur, my concern is for Mark's *presentation* of Jesus's identity via the literary shape of his Gospel rather than for the construction of Jesus's identity itself.⁶⁸

64. See David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 3-4; Malbon, "How Does Story Mean?", 30; Moloney, *Storyteller*, 31 on the importance of reading Mark as a unified whole; see Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 6-13 (Frei's comment on page 13 is particularly to the point: "By speaking of the narrative shape of these accounts, I suggest that what they are about and how they make sense are functions of the depiction or narrative rendering of the events constituting them."); Tannehill "Narrative," 57-58; Larry Chouinard "Gospel Christology: A Study of Methodology," *JSNT* 9/30 (1987): 26-28; Culpepper, *Mark*, 3 on the inseparability of meaning and form.

65. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186. Two pages earlier (184), Arendt states that "The disclosure of the 'who' through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt. Together they start a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes into contact."

66. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 140.

67. Ricoeur, *Oneself*, 141 further explains that "[Identity] can be described in dynamic terms by the competition between a demand for concordance and the admission of discordances which, up to the close of the story, threaten this identity. By concordance, I mean the principle of order that presides over what Aristotle calls 'the arrangement of facts.' By discordances, I mean the reversals of fortune that make the plot an ordered transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation." This model is concordant with Frei, *Eclipse*, 13, who argues that the "narrative rendering" of the Gospels provides a cumulative account of the theme."

68. Ricoeur, *Oneness*, 141 argues that "the identity of the character is constructed in connection with that of the plot." I would simply replace the word "constructed" with "presented" when dealing with a historical person, such as Jesus.

That said, Ricoeur's discussion provides a well-suited framework for comprehending the tension between the messianic background (sameness-identity) and imperial foreground (contrasting feature) of Jesus's identity as Son of God.

On a practical level, then, this study will proceed by attending to the story-as-discoursed: in other words, the literary shape and rhetorical features of Mark's narrative.⁶⁹ The premise underlying this approach is that the story has been structured so as to influence the readers in a particular way.⁷⁰ As Mary Ann Tolbert contends, "The rhetorical structure uncovered [once analyzed] can, then, become the foundation for an interpretation of the Gospel."⁷¹ If Tolbert's case is somewhat overstated, it nevertheless holds true in this instance, where the rhetorical feature in view is a broad inclusio governing the main body of Mark from 1:10-15:39. As C. Kavin Rowe states, attending to such rhetorical techniques is ultimately "to become aware of the literary way in which the ancients did things with words."⁷²

Finally, then, while ahistorical narrative readings certainly exist, the present study intends to be a historically-sensitive narrative reading. In this regard, I second the position expressed by A. Y. Collins that "Whatever tension there may be between literary- and historical-critical methods, the two approaches are complementary."⁷³ In keeping with this position, I have drawn upon Umberto Eco's concept of the "cultural encyclopedia" so as to elucidate the double-edged thought-world in which Mark participates—that of his first century Jewish background / Roman imperial foreground—and thereby establish the parameters within which the title "Son of

69. Rhoads, *Mark as Story*, 3–4; and Malbon, "How Does Story Mean?" 32–33 both list the following six elements of narrative: implied author, implied reader, characters, settings, plot, and rhetoric (the *how* of narrative). Of these elements, my argument per this thesis concerns only the final one.

70. A premise supported by the readings of Tannehill, "Narrative": 58–59, 88–89; Chouinard, "Gospel Christology": 27; Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 41; Moloney, *Storyteller*, 32.

71. Tolbert, *Sowing*, 90.

72. C. K. Rowe, *Early*, 15.

73. Adela Yarbro Collins "Narrative, History, and the Gospel," *Semeia* / 43 (1988): 150, 153; see also Moloney, *Storyteller*, 35–36.

God" could have been used / heard in his day.⁷⁴ Thus, the methodology of this thesis may be summarized as an examination of how Mark develops Jesus's identity as Son of God through the rhetorical structure of his narrative in light of the existing tensions surrounding that title in his and his readers' mutual cultural encyclopedia.

1.3 Summary and Thesis

I am in general agreement, on the one hand, with those who identify the background of "Son of God" as a) primarily Jewish and b) messianic; not least in view of the connotations of Davidic kingship stemming from the allusion to Psalm 2 in 1:11. Nevertheless, the fact can hardly be ignored that "son of God" was a ubiquitous title of extreme import in the Greco-Roman world, especially to the imperial cult, and most especially as a favored title of Augustus himself. Thus, I am in equal agreement with those scholars who maintain that Mark's use of divine sonship language should be read in connection with the Roman imperial cult, especially where such language occurs on the lips of a Roman centurion, who can only be expected to speak thus with the emperor (rather than Israel's Messiah) in mind. Yet, while a pure history of religions approach can bring the interpreter no further than to a recognition of the disparate meaning of this title, a narrative critical approach grasps hold of this contrast and asks what might be the dynamic, cumulative effect thereof. Such a route is invited by Mark's own juxtaposition of the messianic and imperial 'sons of (g)God' by way of a highly probable inclusio encapsulating the entire earthly career of Jesus from his baptism to his crucifixion. In so doing, Mark frames the ministry of Jesus in terms of a tension between the Jewish Messiah and the Roman emperor.

74. Eco, 148.

In this thesis, therefore, I will argue that the cumulative meaning of "Son of God" in the inclusio of Mark 1:10–11/15:38–39 dynamically contrasts the messianic and imperial associations of the title such that the royal claim of the crucified Messiah is finally proffered over that of the Roman emperor, whose title is effectively expropriated and awarded to Jesus instead. In the simplest of terms, the rhetorical effect is to say 'Jesus the Messiah is the true Son of God, and Caesar is not.' Moreover, the following thesis offers a narrative perspective on the force of the christological title most central to Mark's Gospel in relation to the world in which he wrote. Ultimately, my hope and conviction is that such a perspective will also lead to a greater grasp of the significance of "Son of God" for the church today.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SON FROM THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Thy rays are upon thy beloved son ... the child who came forth from thy rays.

– A Hymn of Akhenaten

By the beginning of Mark's narrative of "the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God," son of God language already comprised an expansive narrative of its own—one flowing from the banks of the Nile as far as the bed of the Tiber in a continuous stream via the channels of Alexander the Great. Mark's use of this terminology is situated at a complex junction along the way. Although he writes amid the latter environment, the affirmation of Jesus's divine sonship at his baptism in 1:9–11 draws from a much earlier point in the historical stream. As is now widely recognized by scholars, the words *οὐ εἰ ὁ υἱός μου* in 1:10 are a clear allusion to Psalm 2:7, thus locating the background of the divine sonship ascribed to Jesus at his baptism in the thought life of ancient Judah.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the concept of divine sonship in ancient Judah itself exhibits a common undercurrent with the motif of divine sonship throughout the ancient Near East: one in which the king consistently was adopted as the son of a deity upon his coronation so as to affect order over chaos by ruling on the deity's behalf. Giving attention to such language in the broader cultural milieu of the ancient Near East, therefore, helps elucidate the original meaning of 'son of God' in the cultural encyclopedia of ancient Judah, and so also Psalm 2:7. Observing this meaning will provide a foundation for understanding the language Mark draws into Jesus's baptismal account, as well as the beginnings of the divine sonship language that comes to surround Mark in the Roman Empire.

⁷⁵ More precisely, Mark 1:10 is a composite allusion to both Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 at the least, and possibly Gen 22:1 as well. The intertextuality behind this verse will be given full consideration in the following chapter.

2.1 The Divine Sonship of Kings in the Ancient Near East

Psalm 2's ascription of divine sonship to the king exemplifies a widespread convention throughout the ANE with parallels in nearly every culture of the region, including Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon, Assyria, and Canaan.⁷⁶ The earliest and most prevalent evidence originates from Egypt, where from at least the Fourth Dynasty (ca. 2650–2500 BC) onward "every Egyptian king might bear the title, '*Son of Re*,' the sun-god."⁷⁷ By the Fifth Dynasty, this title commonly appeared on monuments, as well as in legends, folk-tales, and poetry.⁷⁸ In later centuries, pharaohs consistently claimed Amon or Amon-Re as father—a practice eventually emulated by Alexander the Great (a matter to which I shall return).⁷⁹

Although one often reads the comment that the idea of divine sonship was less common in Mesopotamia than in Egypt, ample evidence of such terminology nevertheless exists among the kings of multiple civilizations in that region.⁸⁰ The Sumerian king Lugalzaggisi is styled "son born by [the goddess] Nisaba," for instance.⁸¹ Claims of divine sonship are admittedly less common in Old Babylon; yet, King Samsu-iluna refers to the goddess Ninmah and god Sin as "mother" and

76. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 6; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 107, 130; Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128; Markus Saur, *Die Königspsalmen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 34; Donaldson, "Son of God" 5:336; Winn, "Son of God" 886; see also Adela Yarbro Collins ("Mark and His Readers: The Son of God Among Jews," *HTR* 92/04 [1999]: 394) who accounts for this background in relation to Mark.

77. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (2 vols.; New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 2:75; see also idem., *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper, 1959), 15; Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 4; John Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, JSOTSup (ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 19–20; according to Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128); and Eric M. Orlin, ("Politics and Religion: Politics and Ancient Mediterranean Religions" in *ER* 11:7277) pharaohs were previously designated "sons of Isis" as early as the First Dynasty (ca. 3000 BC) and were thus identified with the god Horus.

78. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 2:76–7.

79. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 2:77.

80. See both Henri Frankfort, (*Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* [Oriental Institute Essay. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], 224); and A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, 7) treating the Mesopotamian claims as exceptional.

81. Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, 16 n. 5, 7; see also Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128.

"father."⁸² A number of Assyrian kings also claimed divine sonship for themselves.⁸³ Evidence likewise exists of Syrian, Hittite, and Canaanite kings making such claims.⁸⁴ Thus, one may initially state that the designation of the king as 'son of God' in Psalm 2:7 (and related OT texts) was quite at home in Israel's surrounding environment.

2.1.1 The Metaphorical Character of Sonship Language in the ANE

As one compares the royal language of divine sonship, moreover, a common character begins to emerge: contemporary scholarship seems to be moving toward an increasing affirmation that such language was largely metaphorical all across the ANE. Traditionally, a distinction has been maintained between the concepts of divine sonship in Egypt versus Mesopotamia. While the latter employed such terms metaphorically, in the case of the former such appellations were meant quite literally, as a surface reading of the following hymn of Akhenaten might suggest:

Thy rays are upon thy beloved son ... the child who came forth from thy rays. You assign to him your lifetime and your years.... He is thy beloved, you make him like Aten [the disk of the sun].... You beget him in the morning like your own forms; you form him as your emanation, like Aten, ruler of truth, who came forth from eternity, son of Re, wearing his beauty.⁸⁵

82. Douglas Frayne, *Old Babylonian period (2003-1595 BC)*, RIME 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 344; cf. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 224.

83. Wilfred G. Lambert "Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic," *AfO* 18 (1957), 50–51; for further evidence see Ashurbanipal in Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, 16 n. 7; Shalmaneser I in Albert Kirk Grayson and Ronald F. G. Sweet, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 182; and Adad-narari II, Tukulti-Ninurta II, and Ashurnasirpal II in Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 147, 165, 199.

84. Fossum, ("Son of God" 6:128) notes the claims of both Virgil (*Aen.* 1:729) and Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 1:86) that "the kings of Tyre traced their divinity to Baal; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, 12) also observe that kings of Damascus in the 9th century BC styled themselves as "son of Hadad"; cf. 1 Ki 15:18–19; 2 Ch 16:2.

85. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 2:409; see also Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 82 (Utterances 273–74; 407–8); "The Asiatic Campaigning of Amen-hotep II," trans. John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 246) an inscription (1447–1421 BC) refers to Amon-Re as the king's father; Fossum, ("Son of God" 6:128) notes an inscription for Rameses II in which the sun-god declares, "I am your Father, who has engendered you as god in order that you be king of Upper and Lower Egypt on My throne.

This and similar depictions of pharaoh as an incarnate god of literal, physical descent from Re are often considered to be a distinctive feature of the Egyptian concept of divine sonship.⁸⁶ Some texts even describe the 'begetting' of the king in overtly sexual terms.⁸⁷ More recently, however, John J. Collins has followed the work of Egyptologists who maintain that the ancient Egyptians may have been "more conscious of the metaphorical character of such language than is often assumed."⁸⁸ Collins points out that such descriptions as those noted above are rather exceptional. Additionally, the fact that pharaoh could be concurrently depicted as the son of a number of deities (including not only Amon-Re but Isis, Osiris, and Khnum) weighs against a literal understanding of such language.⁸⁹

The metaphorical character of sonship language in Mesopotamia, on the other hand, has never been seriously questioned. Henri Frankfort cites the following words of King Gudea to the god Gatumdug toward this point: "I have no mother; thou art my mother. I have no father; thou art my father." According to Frankfort, "The unrealistic projection of both parents in one divine person accentuates the figurative meaning of the expressions."⁹⁰ Peter Machinist likewise emphasizes the metaphorical nature of the language used in the *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta* (1243–1207 BC), which claims of the king that "Enlil, like a natural father, exalted him second to

86. Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128; Orlin, "Politics and Religion" 11:7277.

87. See, for example, the mortuary inscriptions of Queen Hatshepsut from Der el-Bahri discussed both in Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 2:76; and A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 4–5; see also Baines, "King and Messiah," 19–20.

88. A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 5–6; following Ronald J. Leprohon, ("Royal Ideology and State Administration in Pharaonic Egypt," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4 vols. [ed. J. M. Sasson; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1995], 1:275); and David P. Silverman, ("The Nature of Egyptian Kingship," in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* [eds. D. B. O'Connor and D. P. Silverman; PAe; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 50, 67–68) who both demonstrate that divinity was associated specifically with the *office* of the king rather than the *person* of the king.

89. A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 5; Frankfort, (*Kingship and the Gods*, 299–300) also recognizes that pharaoh could "appear as the child of a number of gods at one and the same time."

90. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 300; see also Engnell, (*Divine Kingship*, 16 n. 7) in reference to Gudea and Gatumdug.

his firstborn son."⁹¹ Thus, an outright assertion of the king's physical descent from the god is avoided.

2.1.2 Identifying the Metaphor(s)

While Collins does not maintain the traditional distinction between a literal versus metaphorical understanding of divine sonship between Egypt and Mesopotamia, he does argue for a distinction between the precise metaphors employed in each setting. In Mesopotamia, sonship language has generally been understood as a metaphor of adoption whereby the deity adopts the king as "son" in order to qualify him to rule on the deity's behalf.⁹² A long tradition exists of reading Psalm 2:7 in a similar fashion, as shall be seen below. Collins, however, posits that the Egyptian language of "begetting" (see, for example, the hymn of Akhenaten above) constitutes an altogether different metaphor from that of adoption. This metaphor, he suggests, conveys "a closer kinship between king and god" than does adoption and is suggestive of a particular nature and empowerment (as well as status) conferred upon the king.⁹³

According to Collins, the specific terminology of "begetting" in Psalm 2:7 is more reflective of this Egyptian background than the Mesopotamian.⁹⁴ Yet, Collins's argument rests in part on the notion that the language of "begetting" is somewhat specific to Egyptian assertions of divine sonship as opposed to Mesopotamian.⁹⁵ This does not seem to be the case, however. According to Ake Sjöberg, "In

91. Peter Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (eds. G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis; Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2006), 161 (italics added to reflect Machinist's own point); see also Lambert "Three Unpublished Fragments": 50–51; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 8.

92. Donaldson, "Son of God" 5:336; Winn, "Son of God" 886.

93. A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 22–24.

94. A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 12, 19–22. One should note that Collins is quick to emphasize that "the Psalms [to be sure] stop well short of the description of divine begetting, in explicit sexual terms, that we find in some Egyptian texts, but, as we have seen, such language is not universal even in Egypt, and was not necessarily understood literally" (22).

95. A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 13, 21.

Mesopotamia, [as in Egypt], the king was 'born' on the day of his enthronement," as depicted at the coronation of Gudea, who says to the goddess Gatamdu, "My seed [i.e., the seed of my father] You have received; in the sanctuary, You have *begotten* me."⁹⁶ Thus, the various references to the king having been birthed by a deity throughout Mesopotamia should perhaps not be thought of as categorically different from the Egyptian language.⁹⁷ Moreover, even if the language of Psalm 2 does reflect specifically Egyptian coronation formulae more so than others in the ANE, it is not clear why the use of the term "begetting" should not belong to the larger category of adoption language. Thus, while I follow Collins's argument regarding the likely metaphorical character of sonship language in Egypt, I am not persuaded that this metaphor should be categorized as one altogether separate from the adoption language employed elsewhere in the ANE.

At last, while divine sonship may bear particular nuances from one culture to another, it is now possible to say something about the common force of such depictions across the ANE. If indeed such language functioned universally as a metaphor of adoption, the thrust of this metaphor (besides the king's election by the deity) appears to have been the concept of the king's derived power from his divine father, on whose behalf he ruled.⁹⁸ Frankfort, for instance, writes in his classic study that in Egypt "society is an inalienable part of the cosmic order and ... the king functions on the plane of the gods as well as on the plane of men."⁹⁹ Pharaoh, then, acted as Re's intermediary on earth. The metaphor conveyed intimacy, but also

96. Åke W. Sjöberg "Die göttliche Abstammung der sumerisch-babyonischen Herrscher," *Orientalia Suecana* 72 (1972), 104–05, 107 (italics mine); see also Fossum, "Son of God" 6:129.

97. See for example, Jerrold S. Cooper, (*Sumerian and Akkadian Royal Inscriptions* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1986], 34) Eanatum of Lagash (ca. 2400 BC) describes himself as the offspring of the god Ningirsu, who "implanted the semen for Eanatum in the womb"; or (Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128) the Sumerian king Msilim of Kish was said to be the "son" or "child" born to a deity in physical terms.

98. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, 2:77–78; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 161; cf. A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 7.

99. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 159.

responsibility. The underlying purpose of such intermediary sonship was to maintain the cosmic order of the Egyptian world.¹⁰⁰ These features underlie the idea of divine sonship in Mesopotamia (including Babylon and Assyria) as well, where "the king, considered an earthly representative of the gods, was entrusted with maintaining order on earth."¹⁰¹

2.2 Divine Sonship in Ancient Israel

The purpose of the brief sketch above has been to illuminate something of the broader cultural encyclopedia within which ancient Israel operated and within which Psalm 2 was written rather than to suggest that whatever divine sonship language conveys elsewhere in the ANE necessarily holds true of Israel as well. Thus, the milieu observed above informs the connotations one might expect of divine sonship in Israel, but does not determine Israel's particular understanding of these terms.¹⁰² Toward that end, one must attend more closely to the evidence found in Israel's own Scriptures.

To begin with, Psalm 2 stands near the center of a small grouping of texts that refer to the king of Judah as YHWH's son, including at a minimum Psalm 89:27–28, as well as the foundational text of 2 Samuel 7:11–16, its parallel in 1 Chronicles 17:13–14, and David's retellings of that scene in 22:10 and 28:6.¹⁰³ Most likely, the

100. Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128; Orlin, "Politics and Religion" 11:7277.

101. Orlin, "Politics and Religion" 11:7276; cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, (*He That Cometh: the Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 36) regarding divine kingship in Babylon specifically.

102. As Hans-Joachim Kraus, (*Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988], 130) states: "The idea was common in the ancient Near East that the king is 'God's son.' The presuppositions, however, under which the sonship of God is to be viewed and understood must be precisely determined in each case."

103. Additionally, Isa 9:6, "For a child has been born to us, a son given to us," is sometimes included among these texts, though scholars continue to debate whether "son" here refers to a future Messiah—so, Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 80; or the contemporary enthronement of King Hezekiah—so, Albrecht Alt, "Jesaja 8,23–9,6. Befreiungsmacht und Krönungstag," in idem., *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 3 vols. [Munich: Beck], 2:218–19). "Your throne, O God," in Ps 45:6 is likewise often read alongside the further description of the "son" as "Mighty God" in Isa 9:6. Though I do not wish to discount the significance of these texts, in my own view they belong to a slightly different family of texts than the immediate family of Psalm 2:7, which is my concern here. That the "son" in Isa 9:6 could also be designated "Mighty God" is

words of "YHWH's decree" (חֶק יְהוָה) reported in Psalm 2:7, "You are my son; today I have begotten you" (בְּנִי אֵתָהּ אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָתִיךָ), refer back to YHWH's declaration in 2 Samuel 7:14, "I shall be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me," (אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה-לּוֹ לְאָב). This text, as well as the above mentioned parallels in 1 Chronicles, suggest that the father-son relationship between YHWH and David's heir is spoken over the entire dynasty.¹⁰⁴ The dual theme of intimacy (including election and the promises of love and protection) coupled with responsibility associated with the divine sonship of the king elsewhere in the ANE is readily observable here: YHWH will also discipline the king when he commits iniquity.¹⁰⁵

Some tradition exists of reading Psalm 89:27–28 (ET vv. 26–27) as a paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:14.¹⁰⁶ Here, the father-son relationship is expressed as an anticipated dialogue in which the king will cry out to YHWH "my Father" (אָבִי), and YHWH will in turn "appoint him firstborn" (אֶרְאֶה-אֲנִי בְכוֹר אֶתְנָהוּ).¹⁰⁷ Noticeably absent from either 2 Samuel 7 or Psalm 89 is any language of 'begetting.' The foundational statement of 2 Samuel 7:12–14 is that the David's offspring *will* (perpetually) *be* (יִהְיֶה) a son to YHWH. Such a statement can only be understood as a metaphor, albeit a nondescript one. By comparison, however, נָתַן in Psalm 89:28 seeming conveys a rather literal statement of the happenings described in the earlier text: the king becomes YHWH's son by a declarative act. Thus, if Psalms 2 and 89 alike refer back

noteworthy; yet, tangential to my present argument. Ultimately, I follow James H. Charlesworth, ("Son of God" in *EDEJ* 1248) who views these appellations as honorifics.

104. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms. 1-50*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1983), 64; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (NIB 4; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 689; Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 199; Donaldson, "Son of God" 5:336.

105. Cf. 1 Chr 17:13–14; 22:10; 28:6. In each of these texts, the "son" bears a definite responsibility before YHWH.

106. See Georg Fohrer, "טָוֹס," *TDNT* 8:350.

107. Italics mine. The term בְּכוֹר is elsewhere used synonymously with בֶּן (Exod 4:22–23; Jer 31:9, 20) and should be understood as such here too.

to 2 Samuel 7 (as seems likely), "begotten" (הָיָה) in 2:7 is best understood as a metaphor affording vivid description to the same reality of declarative appointment in intimate terms already appropriate to the overarching metaphor of divine sonship.¹⁰⁸

2.2.1 Divine Sonship in Psalm 2

Psalm 2 itself occupies a central position within this group as a text that sheds light upon the actual enthronement of Judah's king. While, some debate exists as to whether this psalm is monarchical or postexilic, the fact that it directly refers to the king's coronation is undisputed.¹⁰⁹ While I follow the line of thought that places Psalm 2 in the early period of the monarchy, Peter Craigie's point is well taken that this psalm does not appear to have been precipitated by "any particular event in history."¹¹⁰ The *Sitz im Leben* is more general than that. The majority of scholars seem to view the precise occasion of the psalm as that of the king's installment ceremony, while others believe the psalm was part of an annual enthronement festival.¹¹¹ Again, I favor the former position; but, in either case, the reference

108. *Contra* A. Y. and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, 28–31) who adopts a different logic, suggesting that "the very language of the formulation [in 2 Sam 7, in difference from Psalm 2], then, draws back from any suggestion of divine begetting, and might even be described, with Mettinger (*King and Messiah*, 265), as a (limited) demythologization of the royal ideology." To describe 2 Sam 7:14 as a "demythologization" (on any level) of the formula one finds in Psalm 2 is odd, however, since scholars uniformly date 2 Sam 7 as an earlier text than either Ps 2 or 89. Indeed, the debate over the dating of Ps 2 has not been whether it falls before or after 2 Sam 7, but whether it belongs to the period of the early monarchy or the postexilic era—see the discussions in both A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 10–12; and Janse, "You Are My Son", 30–34. Thus, Collins's position is made possible only by resting on the postulation of a Deuteronomiac redactor.

109. See again the discussions in A. Y. and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, 10–12) supporting the earlier period; and Janse, ("You Are My Son", 30–34) in favor of a postexilic date. For the view that Psalm 2 is a coronation psalm, see for example Charles A. Briggs, Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1906), 1:12, 16; Martin Noth, "God, King, and Nation in the Old Testament," in idem., *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 172–73; Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 5; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh, passim*; idem., *Psalmenstudien II* (Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), 114, 177, 310; Craigie, *Psalms*, 64; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 125–26; McCann, *Psalms*, 689; Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 80–85; John Goldingay, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 1:96; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 2–3; Janse, "You Are My Son", 10; Ross, *Psalms*, 199.

110. Craigie, *Psalms*, 66.

111. Supporting an installment ceremony, see Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 5; Craigie, *Psalms*, 67; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 11; Ross, *Psalms*, 199; Terrien, *Psalms*, 80–81; supporting an annual festival,

to the king's enthronement is clear.

The king's enthronement bears a further context of its own, however. Psalm 2 depicts an image of the king's crown being conferred in midst of a surrounding tumult that might well be called 'chaos.' The empires and foreign kings of the earth are in rebellion against YHWH, as well as the king himself (vv. 1–3).¹¹² It is in direct response to this situation that YHWH declares in 2:5, "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill" (וָאֲנִי נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֶלֶכִּי עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ).¹¹³ These words then provide the immediate context of the king's own retelling of YHWH's decree to him: "You are my son; today I have begotten you."¹¹⁴ Accordingly, the psalm closes with a warning to the same kings of the earth to "serve YHWH" (עֲבָדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה) and "kiss the son" (נִשְׁקוּ־בֶר)—in other words, to cease their rebellion and acknowledge YHWH's authority mediated through the king (vv. 10–12).¹¹⁵

Several scholars have observed the similarity of Psalm 2 to coronation liturgies elsewhere in the ANE, further supporting the likelihood that this text served precisely that purpose in Judah.¹¹⁶ Craigie believes that the liturgy involves multiple parts (YHWH, the king, and the nations) that were recited by different speakers (the king himself reciting verses 7–9), though others, such as John Goldingay, believe the king is the speaker throughout the psalm.¹¹⁷ In any case, the

see Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien II*, 114, 177, 310; Kraus, *Psalms*, 126; McCann, (*Psalms*, 689) is willing to entertain either possibility.

112. Craigie, *Psalms*, 65; Kraus, *Psalms*, 128; Terrien, *Psalms*, 80–81; Ross, *Psalms*, 202–04.

113. Craigie, *Psalms*, 66; Janse, "You Are My Son", 21. Regarding the appropriateness of the translation above, one may note that נִסְכַּח is readily able to convey the specific meaning "to install" (so NASB, NIV, and NET). In my opinion this is a superior translation to the less clear "set" (ESV and NRSV).

114. According to Craigie, *Psalms*, 67; Kraus, *Psalms*, 129–30; Terrien, *Psalms*, 84; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:100 the "decree" (הֶחֱקַדְשָׁה) may have been the physical document given to the king during the coronation ceremony to officially verify his legitimacy (see 2 Kgs 11:12). The decree symbolizes a renewal of YHWH's commitment to the Davidic dynasty.

115. Craigie, *Psalms*, 66; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 22; Janse, "You Are My Son", 21.

116. Gerald Cooke "Israelite King as Son of God," ZAW 73/2 (1961): 217; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 265–66; Craigie, *Psalms*, 64–65; McCann, *Psalms*, 689; Terrien, *Psalms*, 84.

117. Craigie, *Psalms*, 65; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:96; in further support of multiple speakers, see McCann, *Psalms*, 689; in further support of a single speaker, see Kraus, *Psalms*, 125.

king's own recounting of YHWH's affirmation of his sonship in verse 7 forms the backbone of the coronation.

The language of begetting in Psalm 2:7 itself is universally understood in a metaphorical sense in accordance with the standard convention throughout the ANE observed above. Thus, the king is said to have been "'born' from God" upon his installation.¹¹⁸ The ensuing debate, however, has concerned what exactly this metaphor signifies. Hans-Joachim Kraus observes both the similarities and differences between the concepts expressed in Psalm 2 and those familiar from Egypt and Mesopotamia. The application of divine sonship in the form of a direct address or official designation found in Psalm 2 (as well as 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89) closely resembles the Egyptian custom; yet, without the mythological imagery, or even the slightest language (metaphorical or otherwise) of *physical* begetting found in either of the former regions.¹¹⁹ Ultimately, Kraus reads the metaphor of 'begetting' here as one of adoption: "the ruler is declared to be 'Son of God' in a sacral legal act"—and many scholars are in agreement.¹²⁰ This reading is supported not only by parallels from the ANE, but by similar legal acts (in non-royal contexts) attested in the OT (e.g. Gen 30:3; 50:23).

Nevertheless, some scholars have found adoption either too expansive or too limiting a term to describe the conventions of divine sonship in Psalm 2. Georg Fohrer, for instance, believes Psalm 2:7 conveys only "basic legal legitimization, which

¹¹⁸ Fossum, "Son of God" 6:128–29; cf. Kraus, *Psalms*, 131.

¹¹⁹ Kraus, *Psalms*, 131; cf. Fossum, ("Son of God" 6:129) who also notes that the language of Psalm 2 most readily reflects the coronation language of Egypt: "The [Egyptian] term is *smen*, which corresponds to the verb in Ps 2:6, 'I have set [מָנַנִי] My king on Zion, My holy hill."

¹²⁰ Gerhard von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," in idem., *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 222–31; Alt, "Jesaja 8,23–9,6" 2:206–25; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 78; Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God": 208–18; Noth, "God and King," 172–73; Kraus, *Psalms*, 131; cf. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, ABC, 3 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:211; Terrien, (*Psalms*, 84–85) who states that "Psalm 2 adopts the terminology of divine sonship but transforms it into a metaphor of adoption"—though, in light of the sketch of divine sonship in the ANE provided above, one might say this terminology already involved a metaphor of adoption in the first place; Goldingay, (*Psalms*, 1:100–01) "To judge from practice elsewhere in the Middle East, 'You are my son' is a performative declaration of adoption"; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 19–20.

is to be distinguished from adoption."¹²¹ Conversely, Craigie argues that "I have begotten you" "means more than simply adoption, which has legal overtones, and implies that a 'new birth' of a divine nature took place during the coronation" (though Craigie stresses that the king remains a human being rather than a divine being).¹²² Opposing statements like these, however, suggest that near to the heart of this debate is the question of what adoption itself means. Fohrer's distinction is puzzling in light of the wide recognition that adoption is fundamentally a legal act aimed at legitimating an heir (or, in this case, an intermediary).¹²³ Yet, the *effect* of this legal act is to create—or at least, redefine—a new relationship, as Craigie and others have realized occurs in Psalm 2:7.¹²⁴ Ultimately, the strongest evidence suggests that the enthronement of Judah's king was depicted in terms of the king's adoption as YHWH's son, provided that adoption itself is properly understood.

Given the context of Psalm 2, one should note that the purpose of this convention echoes that of divine sonship elsewhere in the ANE: the son rules as YHWH's intermediary to guarantee cosmic order, the defeat of Israel's (and YHWH's) enemies, establishing harmony and peace.¹²⁵ His adoption secures his authority to rule on YHWH's behalf; his enthronement, as such, is YHWH's answer to the surrounding chaos.

121. Fohrer, *TDNT* 8:350.

122. Craigie, *Psalms*, 67.

123. Moshe Weinfeld "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* (1970): 184–203; Roland De Vaux, "The King of Israel, Vassal of Yahweh," in idem., *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (; New York: Doubleday, 1971), 152–80; P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, ABC (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 207.

124. Craigie, *Psalms*, 67; Kraus, *Psalms*, 131; see also Fohrer, (*TDNT* 8:348) himself: υἱός is foremost a relational term.

125. Craigie, *Psalms*, 66; Ronald S. Hendel, "Israelite Religion" in *ER* 7:4243; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 22.

2.3 From Egypt and Back Again

Thus, the concept of divine sonship expressed in Psalm 2 bears multiple resonances with similar ideas throughout the ancient Near Eastern context in which it grew up. Before tracing this particular Jewish tributary of sonship language along the currents of the Second-Temple period and beyond—to Mark's own milieu—one should not assume that such language simply faded out in the rest of the ANE. In fact, it did not—especially in Egypt. In the place where kings were first affirmed with the language of divine sonship circa 3000 BC, so appeared Alexander the Great in 331 BC as conqueror. In an apparent bid to be recognized as the legitimate pharaoh of Egypt, Alexander embarked on a six-week detour from his campaign to visit the oracle of Ammon (Amon) at Siwah in order to trace his own descent from the god (in apparent recognition of the Egyptian tradition).¹²⁶ There, according to Plutarch, Alexander saw a vision in which Amon declared to him, "Child, Alexander, you are born of my seed!"¹²⁷ Thus, he became known as "son of Ammon," and the Greek equivalent "son of Zeus."¹²⁸

Neither Alexander nor the Hellenistic culture trailing after him influenced Jewish or Christian notions of divine sonship in any noticeable way. Yet, Alexander's legacy did bear profound influence on one particular structure with whom all the New Testament writers were acquainted: the imperial cult of Rome beginning with Augustus himself, whose own birth was styled after Alexander's in legends recorded by Suetonius.¹²⁹

126. Arrian, *Anab.*, 3.3; Plutarch, *Alex.*, 27–28; idem., *Dial. mort.*, 14.

127. Richard Stonemann, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (London: Penguin, 1991), 62.

128. Arrian, *Anab.*, 4.9–12; Plutarch, *Alex.*, 2–3, 27–28; James Romm, *Alexander the Great: Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), 104–07.

129. A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 48–74; regarding the specifically the influence of Alexander's legacy on the imperial cult of the Caesars, see Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94; Hengel, *Son of God*, 30; Simon Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 55; A. Y. and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 53. According to Collins, the title *divi filius* bears the direct influence of the "Hellenistic ideas of the divinity of the rule" left behind by Alexander.

2.4 Bearing on the Gospel of Mark

Thus, the Jewish concept of divine sonship forms one tributary running off the overall historical stream of "son of God" while Alexander carries the current in quite another direction to which I will return in due course. At the present, however, it is specifically the Jewish current of divine sonship that flows through the Jordan of Jesus's baptism in Mark 1:9-11 by way of Psalm 2. That current, quite in keeping with the overall milieu of the ANE observed above, signifies a king mediating God's own rule on earth for the purpose of affecting order in place of chaos, justice in place of rebellion, and peace in place of warfare. Moreover, the language Mark draws into his narrative from Psalm 2 is specifically coronation language for the installment of a king: the king who is God's answer to the rebellion of earthly kings against his authority and, likewise, the tumultuous condition of the world in which the people of God find themselves. Such is the watercourse Mark brings to bear in his account of the voice from heaven: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου. Yet, this terminology involves a further stage of development leading up to and surrounding Mark's own use: that of Second-Temple Judaism, to which I will soon turn.

CHAPTER THREE: ANOINTING THE SON

And immediately, upon coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him; and a voice came from the heavens: "You are my Son, the beloved, in whom I have been well pleased."

– Mark 1:10–11

A distance of some centuries lies between Psalm 2 and the Gospel of Mark, to say nothing of the cultural distance between the ancient Near East and the Roman Empire; yet, *this* is the language of divine sonship that the reader first encounters following Mark's incipit (1:1). Psalm 2 thus provides the starting point for the narrator's own understanding of Jesus's identity as "Son of God." Of course, old metaphors have a way of inheriting new meaning in the context of a new story and historical setting.¹³⁰ Such is the case of Psalm 2 in Mark's baptismal account, where the words "You are my son" are woven into a complex web of OT allusions coupled with a considerable reception history in early Judaism—not to mention the Gospel's own narrative context.

The Gospel has scarcely begun when the reader encounters "Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" coming "to be baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mark 1:9). The episode marks Jesus's first appearance in the narrative. Given that he has been introduced to the reader as Χριστός and υἱὸς θεοῦ from the beginning, it is not surprising that Mark recounts his initial appearance on the scene in terms that elaborate on this precise identity of Jesus, stated in 1:1.¹³¹ The introduction to the

130. I do not, however, mean that the original meaning of the text is ever negated or even neglected. As Richard Hays, (*Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 15) similarly writes, "The literal historical sense of the OT is not denied or negated; rather, it becomes the vehicle for latent figural meanings unsuspected by the original author and readers." See also Thomas R. Hatina, "Embedded Scripture Texts and the Plurality of Meaning: The Announcement of the 'Voice from Heaven' in Mark 1.11 as a Case Study," in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels*, LNTS 1, 3 vols. (ed. T. R. Hatina; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 81.

131. I read χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ appositionally in 1:1; hence why I speak of these titles in terms of a single identity above. For others who read the baptismal account as an elaboration of Jesus's stated identity in 1:1, see Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ*, 33; idem., *Christology*, 69–71, 98; France, *Mark*, 73; Gundry, *Mark*, 47; cf. Moloney, *Storyteller*, 59; Winn, *Purpose*, 101.

baptismal scene itself (1:9) bears a heavily Semitic character. For instance, the construction καί ἐγένετο ... ἦλθεν is never found outside biblical Greek and the wording ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις likewise reflects the language of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹³² These features have led some to suggest an original Hebrew or Aramaic narrative present in the background of the Greek text.¹³³ Whatever the likelihood of such a hypothesis, the overwhelmingly Judaic background of this scene is apparent. This character of the text befits the fact that Mark's baptismal scene is heavily imbued with allusions to Israel's Scriptures—so much so that it would not be improper to describe the event as a gathering of OT motifs in and around the person of Jesus.

3.1 Divine Sonship in Sea of Isaianic References

The two most apparent OT allusions at Jesus's baptism are found in the words of the voice from heaven in Mark 1:11: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα, which is best understood as a composite allusion to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. The initial clause, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου, is a near quotation of Psalm 2:7 LXX (υἱός μου εἶ σύ), while ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα recalls the language of Isaiah 42:1 (αὐτὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἔδωκα/יְהוָה נָפְשִׁי). Admittedly, scholars have not always agreed on this point, but the overwhelming majority today share this reading of the evidence.¹³⁴ The origin of ὁ ἀγαπητός is also less clear, though I follow Joel Marcus's argument that this feature, too, has its source in Isaiah 42:1.¹³⁵ Isaiah appears to be a pervasive

132. Gundry, *Mark*, 47; Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 178; Edwards, *Mark*, 34; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 35; C. Clifton Black, *Mark* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2011), 58; Mark L. Strauss, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 71.

133. E.g., A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 147. Though Collins' hypothesis is possible, however, I would caution that such Semiticisms alone should not lead one to this conclusion since, in fact, all of the NT writers regularly exhibit Semiticisms in their writing.

134. See the discussion of the various positions and the scholars who have held them by Rikk E. Watts, "Mark," in *CNTUOT* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 122.

135. Marcus, *Way*, 52–3.

influence in the background of Mark's baptismal account—as, indeed, the author has conditioned the reader to expect based on his introduction (καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἰσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ; 1:2).¹³⁶ A. Y. Collins suggests that Isaiah 61:1 serves as a precedent for 1:10. Here, the Spirit's coming (πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ/יהוה יְהִי עָלַי) coincides with YHWH's anointing (ἐχρίσεν)—a cognate of the appellation Χριστός in 1:1.¹³⁷ This intertextual link is compelling, though the descent of the Spirit in 1:10 is probably most directly related back to Isaiah 42:1 (τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν/עָלִי רוּחִי יְהוה). Sam Janse meanwhile argues persuasively that Isaiah 11 (a text read alongside Ps 2 elsewhere in early Jewish literature) probably also lies in the background of the Spirit's descent in Mark 1:10.¹³⁸ Ultimately, Robert Guelich is probably correct to suggest that each of these passages in Isaiah is called to mind in Mark 1:11.¹³⁹

The very first element in this episode suggestive of a clear OT referent, however, is the rending of the heavens in 1:10 (σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς), which recalls Isaiah 63:19 LXX/MT (ET 64:1): ἐὰν ἀνοίξης τὸν οὐρανόν/לֹא־קָרַעְתָּ שָׁמַיִם. While the LXX translates קָרַע with ἀνοίγειν, Mark's σχίζειν is actually a closer equivalent to the Hebrew verb. Rudolf Pesch expresses reservations about the relationship between this single verse in Isaiah and Mark 1:10 (noting that "*Joseph and Aseneth* 14:2 uses ἐσχίσθη ὁ οὐρανός in a description of a vision that bears no

136. See also the arguments of Rikk E. Watts, (*Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], *passim*); and Marcus, (*Way*, *passim*) that Mark largely frames his Gospel according to Isaiah's prophecies.

137. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 149; cf. Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 49.

138. Janse, "*You Are My Son*," 83–84.

139. Guelich, *Mark*, 32.

140. As widely observed by Lane, *Mark*, 55; Guelich, *Mark*, 32; Juel, *Mark*, 34; James R. Edwards "The Baptism of Jesus According to the Gospel of Mark," *JETS* 34/1 (1991): 44–45; idem., *Mark*, 35; Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 49–50; idem., *Mark*, 159; Gundry, *Mark*, 48; Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, *passim*; France, *Mark*, 77; Boring, *Mark*, 45; Culpepper, *Mark*, 49; Stein, *Mark*, 56; Strauss, *Mark*, 72.

relation to Isa 63:19"); however, Marcus and Ivor Buse each observe this is not the only point of contact Mark 1:10 shares with the larger context of Isaiah 63–64.¹⁴¹

Thus, the sonship language of Psalm 2 is here immersed in a broadly Isaianic sea. I will now attend to each of the allusions noted above in turn as each unveils alike the context and connotations of υἱὸς θεοῦ per the Markan narrative.

3.1.1 Rending the Heavens: A New Exodus

Rikk E. Watts argues convincingly that the rending of the heavens at Jesus's baptism not only recalls Isaiah 63:19, but that the intention behind this allusion is to call the Isaianic theme of the "new exodus" into the present narrative.¹⁴² This verse, in fact, follows Isaiah's recounting of the original exodus event (63:11–14). In 63:19, then, the prophet implores YHWH to "look down from heaven and see" and have compassion on his people once more. In this vein, Isaiah's wish that YHWH would "rend the heavens and come down" anticipates a new redemption echoing Israel's exodus (63:19). The accompanying effect in 64:1b—"that the mountains might quake at your presence"—recalls Israel's subsequent stay at Sinai (cf. Exod 19:18), suggesting all the more that Isaiah has in mind a second exodus.

Several other features of the Isaianic context besides the rending of the heavens likewise correspond to the present Markan narrative. For instance, YHWH bringing his people "up out of the sea" in 63:11 parallels Jesus coming up out of the water in Mark 1:10, while the Spirit's descent upon (καταβαῖνον εἰς) Jesus mirrors the descent of the Spirit (κατέβη πνεῦμα παρὰ κυρίου) in 63:14 LXX.¹⁴³ Given these

141. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1:90–1; Ivor Buse "The Markan Account of the Baptism of Jesus and Isaiah LXIII," *JTS* 7/1 (1956), 74–75; Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 49.

142. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*. See pages 102–19 regarding Mark's baptismal account specifically; Richard Schneek, (*Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark I–VIII* [Vallejo, CA: BIBAL, 1994], 44–7) likewise argues that Isa 63:7–64:11 stands in the background of Mark 1:10.

143. Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 49–50; Schneek, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark*, 45; Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 120.

several parallels, the case seems likely that Mark indeed means to frame his account of Jesus's baptism as the occasion of Isaiah's new exodus.¹⁴⁴ This theme, then, sets the stage for the remainder of the episode to follow. In this case, however, one further parallel is worthy of observance. The immediate result of the exodus Isaiah anticipates is (in 64:1 LXX/MT) "to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence"—a scene not dissimilar to the context of Psalm 2 observed in the previous chapter.

3.1.2 Placing a Crown on the New Exodus

Thus, the time has come to revisit Psalm 2 in its new context. While Psalm 2:7 originally referred to the enthronement of the Davidic king as YHWH's answer to the rebellion of the nations, some commentators question whether this psalm retains this same function in Mark 1:11. Robert Stein, for instance, reads the declaration "You are my Son" at face value as a statement of filial relationship rather than Jesus's enthronement (via adoption) as Messiah (thus, for Stein the function of υἱός is seemingly ontological rather than metaphorical).¹⁴⁵ That Mark would highlight an allusion to a text featured so prominently in the coronation of Judah's king without any regard for the contextual implications of such an allusion seems unlikely, however.¹⁴⁶

144. Additionally, the author's unusual choice of σχίζειν in place of ἀνοίγειν may further signify a connection to the exodus event: in Exodus 14:21 LXX the verb ἐσχίσθη is used to describe the parting of the sea; cf. Edwards "Baptism of Jesus": 45; idem., *Mark*, 35.

145. Stein, *Mark*, 58–59; see also Guelich, *Mark*, 34; France, *Mark*, 82–83; and, to a lesser extent, Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 123. Stein emphasizes that a) the emphatic use of οὐ signifies that Mark 1:11 is about Jesus' identity rather than his adoption or enthronement; and b.) the fact that the rest of Ps. 2:7 ("today I have begotten you") is absent from 1:11 suggests that Mark does not have an adoptive coronation in mind. Per the first point, however, Mark's emphasis on Jesus's identity is not mutually exclusive with an enthronement scene; and per the second, Stein's logic contrasts with that of most scholars today who rather follow the argument made by C. H. Dodd (*According to the Scriptures* [London: Fontana, 1952], 126) that the NT writers usually intend to call to mind the larger OT contexts to which they allude.

146. Additionally, one should note that reading the text in this fashion does not strictly limit the connotations of Jesus's divine sonship those of juridical adoption. Some scholars who read Mark 1:10–11 as Jesus's enthronement likewise deny that υἱός should be understood only in terms of adoption (so Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 71; Boring, *Mark*, 46; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 150). Marcus (*Way of the*

3.1.2.1 The Messianic Interpretation of Psalm 2 and the Son of God in Early Judaism

Meanwhile, the likelihood that Mark references Psalm 2 (and, so also, υἱός in 1:11) messianically is supported by the messianic development of this psalm and the language of divine sonship throughout the Second Temple period. *Midrash Psalm* 2:9, for example, explicitly states that the "son" in 2:7 is the Messiah.¹⁴⁷ Nowhere is this tendency more observable than in the literature of Qumran, however. To begin with, 4QFlorilegium (4Q174) contains quotations from 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2, and Psalm 89—the three essential divine sonship texts in the OT noted in the previous chapter. The "son" of 2 Samuel 7:14 is here identified as "the branch of David" (I.10–11; cf. Isa 11:1), which is elsewhere explicitly messianic (4Q252 V.1–4).¹⁴⁸ As J. J. Collins writes, this text "shows that the promise to David was understood as grounds for messianic hope, and that the messiah, like the king in 2 Samuel 7, could be regarded as a son of God, in some sense."¹⁴⁹

One of the most notable texts in this grouping is 4QAramaic Apocalypse (4Q246), often called the 'Son of God Text.' This scroll refers to a figure who will be called "son of God" and "son of the Most High" (II.1; cf. Mark 5:7). There has been some debate about whether this figure should be identified with the foreign oppressor describe in column one, or with the messianic deliverer described throughout the remainder of column two; however, the latter option seems much

Lord, 71) for example, maintains that Jesus's divine sonship in 1:11 signifies that he is also granted "the superhuman power necessary to *accomplish* [his] task." What is perhaps crucial to understand whenever adoption is spoken of in the context of enthronement, however, is that it signifies merely the legal metaphor—the mechanism—by which the coronation of the king proceeds. As such, the king is adopted as son in a purely functional (rather than ontological sense). The possibility of Jesus's preexistence, as such, is not excluded by a royal adoptionist reading of this sort, nor are the further associations of Jesus's divine sonship noted by Marcus. This seems to be the vein in which Perkins, (*Mark*, 528); and Peppard, (*Son of God*, 87) each affirm divine adoption in 1:11. In any case, the royal implications of Ps. 2:7 in Mark 1:11 do not depend on an adoptionist reading.

147. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 127; Janse, "You Are My Son," 74.

148. France, *Mark*, 80; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65; Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124; Janse, "You Are My Son", 51, 54; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 49.

149. A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 64.

more logical.¹⁵⁰ The son of God will rule over an eternal kingdom, as well as "judge the earth in truth [such that] all will make peace," and his strength will come from God (II.5–8). Although this text contains no explicit reference to Psalm 2, Janse surmises that "texts like Ps. 2:7 and 2Sam 7:14 must have served as background material in order to explain where the Messianic figure of this Aramaic writing obtains these titles from."¹⁵¹

Finally, 1QRule of the Congregation (1Q28^a) speaks of God 'begetting' (יוליד; cf. ילדתי in Ps 2:7) the Messiah, thus implying the divine sonship of the Messiah again and, quite probably, in manner dependent on Psalm 2:7.¹⁵² Wherever "son of God" appears in the literature of Qumran, then, the reference is to the Messiah, and Psalm 2 (along with 2 Samuel 7) either explicitly or presumably lies behind this association.

The messianic interpretations of Psalm 2 are not limited to Qumran, however. Likely written during the first century BC, the *Psalms of Solomon* are recognized as preserving "one of the most detailed messianic expectations in the immediate pre-Christian centuries."¹⁵³ A key psalm, *Psalms of Solomon* 17, contains allusions to 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 2 and 89; as well as Isaiah 11, 42:1, and 49:1–6 (Pss. Sol. 17:4, 21–24, 28, 36–37; 43): texts that each contain references to a royal messianic figure, including three that describe the king as son of God.¹⁵⁴ According to Watts, "*Psalms of Solomon* 17 is virtually a commentary on Ps. 2."¹⁵⁵ The clearest allusions to the psalm occur in verse 3 and especially verses 23–24 where it is said that the Messiah will "smash the

150. See especially A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 66–71; additionally, A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 65; Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124; Janse, "*You Are My Son*", 53; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 49.

151. Janse, "*You Are My Son*", 53; cf. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124.

152. So also Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124; Janse, "*You Are My Son*", 53; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 49.

153. R. B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 643; see also James H. Charlesworth, "The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," *ANRW* II.19.1, 188–218.

154. So already Janse, "*You Are My Son*", 66.

155. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 123.

arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to shatter all their substance with an iron rod; to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth" (cf. Ps 2:8–9).¹⁵⁶ I will discuss other important features of this text below, but the case is already clear that *Psalms of Solomon* 17 reflects a messianic reading of Psalm 2, and so implicitly a messianic understanding of the "son" in Psalm 2:7.¹⁵⁷

Additionally, *Sibylline Oracles* 3.652–664 (mid 2nd BC) seems to reflect Psalm 2 when speaking of the rise of a messianic king in midst of kings who "launch an attack together against [Jerusalem], bringing doom upon themselves" (3.664).¹⁵⁸ One may note probable allusions to Psalm 2 in the Similitudes of 1 *Enoch* 37–71 (1st BC – AD 1st) where "the kings of the earth and the mighty landowners [are] humiliated" because "they denied the Lord of Spirits and his Messiah" (48:8, 10).¹⁵⁹ Finally, 4 *Ezra* (AD 1st) contains four references to the Messiah as God's son in 7:28–29; 13:37, 52; and 14:9. Debate exists as to whether or not the sonship language in this text is dependent on Psalm 2, but in either case God's "son" refers to the Messiah.¹⁶⁰

Thus, Jewish sources of the Second Temple period overwhelmingly interpreted Psalm 2 in a messianic sense and, likewise, identified the "son of God" as the Messiah.¹⁶¹ The case is extremely probable, then, that Mark does so too.

Whereas the liturgy of the Davidic king's enthronement conditions the expectation of the Messiah's enthronement throughout early Judaism, so the words of the voice

156. Trans. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon."

157. A. Y. Collins, (*Mark*, 65); and Marcus, (*Way of the Lord*, 59) also consider Pss. Sol. 17:21–24 to reflect a messianic reading of Psalm 2.

158. So also J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 357; Janse, "You Are My Son", 69–70. Trans. J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles."

159. Trans. E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). This allusion is supported by both Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124; and Janse, "You Are My Son", 72.

160. John J. Collins, (*The Scepter and the Star: the Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 165) supports this dependency in 13:37, while Janse ("You Are My Son," 69) doubts it.

161. Cf. Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 61.

from heaven, σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου, in 1:11 signify that Jesus's baptism is in fact the scene of his messianic coronation.¹⁶²

3.1.2.2 The Rest of the Story in Mark 1:11

This reading is immediately reinforced by the remainder of the composite quotation, beginning with the appositive ὁ ἀγαπητός. While Mark's phrasing σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου closely resembles the LXX/MT (which do not really differ from one another at this point), *Targum Psalm* 2:7 interestingly reads "you are beloved to me like a son to father" (הביב כבר לאבא אנת). The inclusion of הביב (cf. ἀγαπητός) has led some scholars to propose that a proto-Targumic tradition accounts for fuller clause above, including ὁ ἀγαπητός.¹⁶³ Marcus, however, argues persuasively that ὁ ἀγαπητός originates from Isaiah 42:1:

Although the Septuagint does not use ἀγαπητός in Isa. 42:1, it does use it in the parallel and related passages Isa. 41:8-9 and 44:2, and a comparison of the Markan/Matthean version of the transfiguration voice (Mark 9:7; Matt. 17:5) with the Lukan version (Luke 9:35) demonstrates the close linguistic relationship between ἀγαπητός and Luke's word ἐκλελεγμένος ("one who has been chosen"), which is a cognate of ἐκλελτός. The strongest piece of evidence for an allusion to Isa. 42:1, however, is that the version of this verse cited in Matt. 12:18 speaks of 'my beloved one,' using precisely the word ἀγαπητός.¹⁶⁴

Additionally, one should note that *Targum Psalm* 2:7 otherwise exhibits far less linguistic similarity to Mark 1:11 than either the LXX or MT. Thus, the most likely background of ὁ ἀγαπητός is Isaiah 42:1, in which case this term substitutes for YHWH's chosen servant.

¹⁶². Thus, A. Y. Collins (*Mark*, 150) appropriately describes Mark 1:11 as an "actualization" of Ps. 2:7.

¹⁶³. Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 30–31; Craig A. Evans, "The Aramaic Psalter and the New Testament," in *From Prophecy to Testament: the Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 76–77; Craig A. Evans, "The Beginning of the Good News and the Fulfillment of Scripture in the Gospel of Mark," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. S. E. Porter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 85.

¹⁶⁴. Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 51; cf. Schneek, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark*, 49. Matt. 12:18 renders Isa 42:1 ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου.

Further evidence based on a probable link between the Targum (or a proto-targumic tradition) of Isaiah and Mark 1:11c offers good reason to associate this figure with the Messiah.¹⁶⁵ While parallels are observable between Mark 1:11c and any version of Isaiah 42:1, Bruce Chilton observes that the precise language "I have been pleased" is found only in *Targum Isaiah* 41:8–9; 42:1; and 43:10 (דָּאֶתְרַעִי בֵּיהּ מִיִּמְרִי; cf. αὐτὸν ἢ ψυχῇ μου ἔδωκα [LXX]/רָצָתָהּ נִפְשִׁי [MT]).¹⁶⁶ Each of these passages likewise mirrors Mark 1:10–11 in both form and content:

- Tg. Isa. 41:8–9: You, Israel my servant, Jacob in whom I have been pleased with you.... You are my servant, I have been pleased with you and I will not cast you off.
 Tg. Isa. 42:1: Behold my servant, ... my chosen in whom my Memra has been pleased; I will put my Holy Spirit upon him.
 Tg. Isa. 43:10: ... my servant the Messiah in whom I have been pleased with him.¹⁶⁷

The evidence of the Targum not only strongly supports an allusion to Isaiah 42:1 in Mark 1:11c, but also suggests Mark's reliance on a targumic tradition. The reader will quickly notice, however, that while *Targum Isaiah* 41:8–9 explicitly identifies the servant as corporate Israel, 43:10 no less explicitly identifies the servant as Israel's Messiah. This contrast is, then, ultimately suggestive of a Messiah who embodies or represents corporate Israel.¹⁶⁸

165. While the Targums are difficult to date with precision, Targum Jonathan is widely thought to have undergone two stages of development, one Tannaitic and the other Amoraic; however, an initial version of Isaiah in Aramaic was most likely penned between AD 70 and 135. This version would have reflected Aramaic interpretation of Isaiah already current prior to AD 70. See the discussion in Paul Virgil McCracken and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 173–75. Thus, it is not improbable that *Targum Isaiah* reflects a tradition known in Mark's own time.

166. Bruce Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1984), 128–30; Bruce D. Chilton, "From Aramaic Paraphrase to Greek Testament," in *From Prophecy to Testament: the Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 34; see also Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 53; Schneck, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark*, 50–4; Evans, "Aramaic Psalter," 76–7. Meanwhile, the contrast between Isa 42:1 per Mark 1:11 and either the MT or LXX of Isa 42:1 are enough to prompt to Sherman E. Johnson, (*A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988], 39) to conclude that "The words of [Mark 1:11] are evidently a quotation from Ps 2:7, conflated with Isa 42:1, the latter from an independent translation, not the LXX."

167. Translations borrowed from Marcus, *Way of the Lord*, 53.

168. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 126–7. As Watts observes, the Davidic king is already the individual most often designated YHWH's chosen servant elsewhere in the OT (2 Sam 6:21; 1 Ki 8:16; 11:34; 2 Chr 6:6; Ps. 78:70; 89:3).

Therefore, both the language of Mark's allusion to Isaiah 42:1 (ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα) and the immediately prior ὁ ἀγαπητός reinforce the suggestion that the figure being anointed for kingship in Mark 1:11 is none other than God's chosen Messiah. Furthermore, just as the messianic readings of both Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 provide the *thematic* basis for Mark's composite allusion, so also the messianically-colored ὁ ἀγαπητός may provide a linguistic basis. Although Mark's phrasing rather reflects the LXX/MT of Psalm 2:7, the appearance of הַבֵּיב in the Targum is all the more intriguing in light of the link between *Targum Isaiah* and Mark 1:11c, as this link strengthens the possibility that Mark have been acquainted with a targumic or proto-targumic reading of the psalm which included the descriptor "beloved."¹⁶⁹ As Craig Evans remarks, "What makes the Aramaic version so appealing is that [*Tg. Ps.* 2:7 and *Tg. Isa.* 42:1] offer the very elements otherwise missing in two OT Scriptures that scholars have long thought underlay the utterance of the heavenly voice."¹⁷⁰ If Mark was in fact acquainted with a targumic tradition of psalms, the presence of הַבֵּיב in 2:7 coupled with a probable tradition that read ἀγαπητός in Isaiah 42:1 may have further encouraged his conflation of these two texts, precisely around a messianic term.

When combined with the allusion to Isaiah 63:19 noted above, Mark 1:10–11 not only presents a) Jesus's baptism as the occasion of Isaiah's new exodus; and b) Jesus's baptism as the scene of the Messiah's coronation; but ultimately presents Jesus's messianic coronation as the occasion of the new exodus when at last the arrogant kings and nations that oppose God's reign will be defeated, per the larger

169. The likelihood that Mark may have relied on Aramaic traditions is bolstered all the more by the Gospel's frequent Aramaisms. One may note, for instance, Hengel, (*Studies in the Gospel of Mark* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 46) "I do not know of any other work in Greek which has as many Aramaic or Hebrew words and formulae in so narrow a space as does the second Gospel"; similarly Schneek, (*Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark*, 49) emphasizes that "the Scriptures were first read in Hebrew in the synagogues of the first century and then the interpretation was given in Aramaic."

170. Evans, "Aramaic Psalter," 76.

contexts of both Isaiah 64 and Psalm 2. At the dead center of this stage is the declaration of the voice from heaven, "You are my Son."

3.2 Mark 1:10–11 in the Milieu of Early Jewish Literature

The implications of Jesus's messianic coronation are illuminated even more, however, when Mark 1:10–11 as a whole are viewed in the light of Second Temple Jewish literature. Much of this literature has already been noted above in relation to the messianic development of Psalm 2; yet, two other features of several of these texts deserve attention.

3.2.1 The Cross-Reading of Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42:1 in Early Judaism

First of all, Mark was not the only interpreter to reference Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 together in the context of messianic expectations. Perhaps the most striking example is that of *Psalms of Solomon* 17. Just prior to the allusion to Psalm 2 in verses 23–24, one reads "See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God (v. 21)."¹⁷¹ Likewise, Watts maintains that the referent behind the "Elect One" in *1 Enoch* 39:6—who is the messianic figure who is spoken of throughout the Similitudes (e.g. 46:4–5; 48:4; 49:2) is again Isaiah 42:1.¹⁷² Finally, *Midrash Psalm* 2:9, interprets the "servant" in Isaiah 42:1 messianically, as well as the "son" in Psalm 2:7.¹⁷³

Beyond these examples, the intertextual web thickens somewhat in the case of the *Testament of Judah* 24:1–6 (2nd BC). This text refers to the rise of a likely messianic figure who is called "the Star of Jacob" (v. 1) as well as "the Shoot of God Most High" (vv. 4, 6). In striking similarity to Mark 1:10, however, 24:2 states that "the heavens will be opened upon him to pour out the spirit as a blessing of the Holy

¹⁷¹ Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," 666 lists Isa 42:1 as a parallel to Pss. Sol. 17:21; cf. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 123–24.

¹⁷² Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 124.

¹⁷³ See Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 127.

Father."¹⁷⁴ Here, ἀνοίγειν is employed as in the LXX, rather than σχίζειν, as in Mark. The likelihood exists, however, that this text like Mark 1:10 is also dependent upon Isaiah 63:19.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, Watts suggests that the terminology of Holy Father (perhaps all the more so when coupled with the Shoot of God Most High) may rely on Psalm 2:7, while also noting that the entire "cluster of ideas—restoration of Israel, life and righteousness for the nations, and in the context of illumination—are close to those found in Isa. 42."¹⁷⁶ Though Christian interpolation has long been suspected of a number of passages in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, H. C. Kee does not note this passage among them.¹⁷⁷ The allusion to Isaiah 11, meanwhile, is clear. The potential, if vague, echoes of the same texts found in the background of Mark 1:10-11 are too intriguing to pass by. Many of these same themes are also found in the *Testament of Levi* 18:6-7, including a) the opening of the heavens; b) the "fatherly voice" of God; and c) the resting of a "spirit of understanding and sanctification" on the priestly figure in view "in the water."¹⁷⁸ Though this second passage almost certainly exhibits later Christian interpolation, Kee believes that only the final clause, "in the water," is an interpolation in an otherwise Jewish text.¹⁷⁹ What these texts, as well as the less questionable examples above, demonstrate is that the conflation of themes, images, and texts found in Mark 1:10-11 is at home among broader early Jewish traditions of interpretation.

174. Translated by H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983).

175. Edwards "Baptism of Jesus," 51; idem., *Mark*, 35.

176. Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 127.

177. Kee, ("Testaments," 775) notes that "ten or more of [the messianic passages] sound specifically Christian; cf. Watts, (Watts, "Mark" in Beale and Carson, *CNTUOT*, 127) who is also aware of the possibility of Christian interpolation, but notes that *T.Jud.* is not as suspected of interpolation as other parts of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

178. Translated by Kee, "Testaments," 795.

179. Kee, "Testaments," 795 c.

3.2.2 Messianic Polemics

Yet, many of these texts share a second feature in common as well: an anti-Roman polemical context. As Wright records, "The eighteen *Psalms of Solomon* incorporate the response of a group of devout Jews to the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century B.C."¹⁸⁰ It is in the context of this response that *Psalms of Solomon* 17 anticipates the coming of a messianic king. This particular psalm makes reference to a conqueror who is often thought to be either Pompey or Titus (vv. 5–20).¹⁸¹ The prayer that God would "undergird [the Messiah] with strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers ... to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth" (v. 22–24), then, responds directly to this "lawless one" (v. 11).¹⁸²

Sibylline Oracles likewise "functioned widely as political propaganda"—prompting Caesar Augustus to order many Sibylline verses destroyed in AD 12 due to their subversive character.¹⁸³ *Sibylline Oracles* 3.350–380 (believed to have been written shortly before the battle of Actium in 31 BC) is in fact an oracle against Rome.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the allusions to Psalm 2 in 3.652–664, following the oracles against the nations, have in mind Rome (among other nations).

The messianic polemic against Rome is even more evident in *4 Ezra*, where the messianic son rises up out of the sea to reprove the nations (13:32, 37) immediately following the "Eagle Vision" of chapters 11–12, in which Rome is identified with the fourth beast of Daniel 7 (12:10–34). (As such, the anti-Roman polemic here sprouts from OT roots.) As Bruce Metzger writes, "In the Eagle Vision (ch. 12) a purely political eschatology is concerned with release from the tyranny of

180. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," 639.

181. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," 641.

182. As Wright, ("Psalms of Solomon," 645) also observes, the fact is worth noting that although "the Messiah in Pss. Sol. 17 is distinctly royal and, one might say, a political figure, he is not military in the ordinary sense for the source of his power is entirely spiritual (17:33)"—just as the fact that he will destroy "by the word of his mouth" (17:24) already suggests.

183. J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 320.

184. J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 357–58.

Rome, secured by the Messiah, who will then set up the Kingdom of God upon earth (12:32–34; cf. 11:44–46)."¹⁸⁵ Finally, E. Isaac notes that *1 Enoch* also exhibits the "revolutionary mood of Jews" against Rome.¹⁸⁶

One should note that the allusions to Psalm 2 in each of the texts mentioned specifically parallel the psalm's rebuke of the nations in verses 4–5, 8–9. Thus, in these contexts Psalm 2 was not only interpreted messianically, but the psalm's polemic against those rulers and nations who oppose God is both retained and emphasized. Just as Psalm 2 originally presented the enthronement of the Davidic king was presented as YHWH's answer to the rebellion of the nations, so also these texts continue to anticipate the coming of the anointed king—now the Messiah—as God's answer to the problem of Rome.

One must, of course, avoid the overly simplistic notion that the same anti-Roman polemic surrounding the messianic interpretations of Psalm 2 in these texts can be assumed of Mark's use of Psalm 2 as well—especially in view of the fact that Mark singles out "You are my Son" rather than the more polemical verses alluded to above. Yet, the recognition that the messianic use of Psalm 2 carried anti-Roman implications not only in the Judaism of the author's time, but in several texts whose interpretive tendencies already display similarities to Mark's at least poses a question. Amid a cultural milieu in which messianic expectations and Psalm 2 in particular are known to have carried anti-Roman implications, one must ask whether the messianic coronation pronouncement "You are my Son" in Mark 1:11 bears an implicit rebuke of Rome (and Caesar in particular) as well.¹⁸⁷

185. B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 521.

186. Isaac, "1 Enoch," 9.

187. Cf. Timothy J. Geddert, ("The Use of Psalms in Mark" *Baptistic Theologies* 1/2 [2009]: 182): "The significance of [the message of Psalm 2] in Mark's Roman imperial context can hardly be over-estimated ... as the divine voice commissions the Son, it announces God's universal kingship over this world's royal pretenders."

3.3 Bridging the Gap

To be sure, the messianic connotations that permeate Mark's first elaboration of υἱός θεοῦ at the baptism scene will remain the operative control governing divine sonship in his cultural encyclopedia. As one bears the above question in mind, however, multiple features of Mark 1:10–11 point to a close connection with a much later scene in Mark's Gospel—one seemingly owing more to the cultural context of Roman imperial ideology than Jewish messianism. I will not repeat all of the arguments in favor of the *inclusio* from 1:10–11 and 15:38–39 noted in chapter one, but certain elements of the present passage demand further attention. First among these is Mark's unusual use of σχιζομένους in 1:10. The evidence presented in this chapter has already demonstrated that the rending or opening of the heavens was a thematic image with precedence in Jewish literature, perhaps originating from Isaiah 63:19. On the other hand, wherever this image is depicted in early Jewish literature, ἀνοίγειν is paired with ὁ οὐρανός rather than σχιζεῖν with a single exception: the romance of *Joseph and Aseneth* (1st BC – AD 2nd). This includes Isaiah 63:19 LXX, where ἀνοίγειν translates the harsher term קָרַע, as well as the parallel accounts of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:22.

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the "heavenly man" is said to descend from the heavens which have been split apart (14:3).¹⁸⁸ The shared language with Mark 1:10, coupled with the motif of a heavenly descent, and the fact that Joseph is repeatedly referred to a "son of God" throughout this work are initially intriguing; upon closer examination, however, the two narratives have quite little in common. The title "son of God" here seemingly refers only to Joseph's superior status ("even to Pharaoh's firstborn") or perhaps that he possesses an extraordinarily godly character—but the

¹⁸⁸ C. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983).

term certainly never functions in a messianic sense.¹⁸⁹ The text as a whole has no messianic overtones whatsoever. In 14:3, one should note that the one who descends is neither God himself (cf. Isa 63:19), nor the Spirit of God (cf. Isa 63:14; Mark 1:10), but a figure known as the "heavenly man." The tale bears no other similarities to the Gospel of Mark. Moreover, this text may well have been written after Mark's Gospel, and is, in any case, suspected of later Christian interpolation.¹⁹⁰ The use of σχίζειν in *Joseph and Aseneth* is perhaps, then, as unusual as it is in Mark (unless it is, in fact, the result of later interpolation), but does not help elucidate Mark's own word choice. Nor does this single occurrence lessen the atypical nature of that choice.

The closest parallel to σχιζομένου in 1:10 is in fact Mark's use of ἐσχίσθη to describe the rending of the Temple veil in 15:38—the only other occurrence of σχίζειν in Mark.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, Mark's use of ἐσχίσθη in the second instance is retained in the parallel accounts of both Matthew 27:51 and Luke 23:45, which highlights the variance in the language of the baptism accounts all the more. The three factors of a) the rarity of σχίζειν in Mark (and generally throughout the NT); b) the extremely rare (though appropriate) use of this term to describe the rending of the heavens; and c) the difference with Matthew and Luke combined suggest a deliberate choice on the author's part. Richard Schneek puts it well: "the verb σχίζω has become a theological catchword for the author. The same verb is used only once more in the gospel: immediately after the death of Jesus at Mark 15:38."¹⁹² Thus, I follow those scholars who contend that this choice is intended to connect the

189. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 191–92.

190. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth," 187.

191. Σχίζειν is already a rare verb occurring only 11 times in the NT: Matt 27:51 (2); Mk 1:10; 15:38; Lk 5:36 (2); 23:45; John 19:24; 21:11; and Acts 14:4; 23:7. Its typical use is in reference to the tearing of cloth, though both instances in Acts refer to divisions between groups of people.

192. Schneek, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark*, 47.

baptismal and crucifixion accounts.¹⁹³ As Eugene Boring suggests, σχιζομένου points both backward to Isaiah 63:19 *and* forward to Mark 15:38.¹⁹⁴ By comparison, A. Y. Collins detects a back-reference to 1:10 in the common diction of 15:38.¹⁹⁵

As Collins's comment above begins to suggest, the similarity between these two passages reaches beyond the mutual use of σχίζειν, which is better understood as the herald of the inclusio rather than the entire occasion of the rhetorical event itself, which is broader than verses 10 and 38. A quick reading of 1:10–11 and 15:38–39 reveals that the diction of each couplet as a whole is in fact quite similar. Generally speaking, both entail a sequence of a) vivid spectacle surrounding the person of Jesus followed by b) a climactic pronouncement about him from c) a speaker who features prominently in the scene.¹⁹⁶ Likewise, the pronominal reference to Jesus is preposed for focus in each instance.¹⁹⁷

Most significantly, then, the climactic feature of each passage is *not* the rending, but rather the declaration of Jesus's divine sonship to which the rending points.¹⁹⁸ The use of σχίζειν points both forward (1:10) and backward (15:38), signaling an event of apocalyptic proportions in each instance; yet, it is precisely the declaration "You are my Son, the beloved, in whom I have been well-pleased," that is launched forward, waiting to be recalled alongside the ironic words of a Roman centurion in 15:39: "Truly, this man was the son of God!" The rending of the heavens and the rending of the Temple veil alike visualize a common apocalypse, the shared

193. Especially France, *Mark*, 77; Boring, *Mark*, 45; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762; Daniel M. Gurtner, "The Rending of the Veil and Markan Christology: 'Unveiling' the 'ΥΙΟΪ ΕΟΥ (Mark 15: 38–39)" *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 295.

194. Boring, *Mark*, 45.

195. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 762.

196. See Appendix B for a visual representation of these parallels.

197. Levinsohn, *Discourse*, 29–30, 37. Pronominal constituents are expected to follow verb; violations of this principle may be considered examples of "preverbal focus."

198. So Marcus, (*Way of the Lord*, 56) observes that the "climactic position is granted to the quotation of Ps. 2:7, which begins the words of the heavenly voice"; and idem., (*Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 163) considers the centurion's acclamation of Jesus's sonship in 15:39 to be "the climactic scene at the end of the Gospel."

content of which is the proclamation of Jesus's divine sonship.¹⁹⁹ In view of the preceding argument, then, nothing less than the pronouncement of Jesus' messianic enthronement by God himself is cast into the scene of his death on the cross (and so also into the face of Roman imperial ideology) where one of his own Roman executioners will at last hail him for who he is. Without further adieu, then, the time has come to visit the "son of god" on the Tiber.

199. cf. Daniel M. Gurtner, ("Rending": 293): "the rending of the heavens led to God's proclamation of Jesus as his "beloved son" (1:11), so the rending of the veil led to the proclamation by the centurion of Jesus as the "son of God" (15:39).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SON ON THE TIBER

Since Emperor Caesar, son of god, god Augustus has by his benefactions to all men outdone even the Olympian gods ... the birthday of the god Augustus signaled the beginning of good tidings for the world that came because of him.

– Composite quotation from *I. Olympia*, 53 and the Calendar Inscription

Along the Tiber near the heart of Rome there stood in the days of Caesar Augustus the *Ara Pacis* ("altar of peace")—one of the Emperor's more remarkable additions to the city's landscape. Located across from this structure was the *Solarium Augusti*, a massive sundial in the shape of an obelisk that cast its shadow directly toward the *Ara Pacis* on Augustus's birthday: the day portrayed in numerous imperial inscriptions as the birthday of a god.²⁰⁰ I cite these artifacts of Roman culture as a twofold remembrance of the imperial ideology, and the "son of (a) god" (*divi filius*; θεοῦ υἱός) around whom it centered. To define more precisely what I mean by imperial ideology, I follow the definition provided by Justin Meggitt: "The cluster of interrelated, mutually suggestive ideas, practices, and their material forms, that articulated and legitimized the dominance of the Roman emperor in the Roman world."²⁰¹ Such a cluster amounts to an inescapable narrative articulated through virtually every facet of Roman culture. In the course of this chapter, I will demonstrate that this narrative of *divi filius* would entail inescapable ramifications for the term υἱός θεοῦ in the cultural encyclopedia of a Roman centurion.²⁰² Moreover, that fact would neither be lost on Mark nor on his first-century audience.

200. On the *Ara Pacis* and *Solarium Augusti*, see Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 144; on such inscriptions, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 54–55.

201. Justin J. Meggitt, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: The New Testament and the Roman Emperor," in *The Quest for Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* (eds. P. J. Budd and C. E. Joynes; Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002), 162 n. 8.

202. The typical rendering of *divi filius* in Greek is θεοῦ υἱός; yet, the title is occasionally written as υἱός θεοῦ, as exemplified in the title of Tiberius's adopted son Germanicus (see n. 41), suggesting that the two could be used interchangeably even though the former was more common; cf. Kim, "Anarthrous": 223; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, JSJSup (eds. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, and G. S. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999): 253–54.

Meanwhile, I will also explore the precise implications of "son of god" language per imperial Rome—in other words, the implications that most naturally would have been in the mind of the centurion in Mark 15:39.

4.1 From Alexander to Augustus

The basic story of Alexander's visit to the oracle at Siwah, whereupon he was addressed as "son of Ammon," has already been recounted above. Then and there, as Alexander became Pharaoh, the Egyptian model of the king's divine sonship entered the Hellenistic world, and through him it would also influence the Roman concept of the emperor's divine sonship. The legend that the house of Macedon was descended from Heracles likely smoothed the path to divine sonship for Alexander, but only after his visit to Siwah in 331 BC did Alexander begin to style himself "son of Zeus," (the Greek equivalent of Ammon) so as to claim "dual paternity comparable to that of Heracles" himself.²⁰³ In days to come, however, Alexander himself, as well as his self-portrayal as 'son of god,' became a model the Roman emperors sought to emulate.²⁰⁴

The influence of Alexander's divine paternity on Augustus is evident from the manner in which the latter's birth legend is styled after the former. After describing the tradition of Alexander's descent from Heracles, Plutarch recounts certain omens that attended his birth, including a serpent that "was once seen lying

203. Albert Brian Bosworth, "Alexander" in *OCD* 59; on Alexander's legendary descent from Heracles by way of Caranus (the legendary progenitor of the house of Macedon) see Plutarch, *Alex.*, 2.2; see also Lily Ross Taylor (*The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Philadelphia: Porcupine, 1975), 6–8, 14–15) who describes the legend of descent from Heracles as "preparation" for the idea of the divine king encountered in Egypt.

204. Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 48; The frequent comparison between Alexander and the Caesars is already evident from the fact that Plutarch recounts the lives of Alexander and Julius Caesar together in a two-volume work: see Plutarch, (*Alex.*, 1.1) "It is the life of Alexander the king, and of Caesar who overthrew Pompey, that I am writing in this book"; see also Hamilton, (J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander: A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), xxxiv) "it is evident that [Plutarch] discerned in them many common qualities"; *ibid.*, (73) also argues that Plutarch himself sees a direct link between Alexander's deification and the ruler cult of his own time.

stretched out by the side of Olympias [his mother] as she slept," leading Philip to neglect his wife thereafter.²⁰⁵ The implication is that Philip is not, in fact, his father.²⁰⁶ Shortly before Alexander's birth, then, Philip is told by the oracle of Delphi to "sacrifice to Ammon and hold that god in greatest reverence."²⁰⁷ In this way, the legend of Alexander's birth anticipates his later address by the oracle at Siwah as "son of Ammon" or "son of Zeus."²⁰⁸ This story is paralleled in a legend about Augustus's birth retold by Suetonius. According to this account, "a serpent glided up to [Attia, his mother] and shortly went away. When she awoke, she purified herself, as if after the embraces of her husband.... In the tenth month after that Augustus was born and was therefore regarded as the son of Apollo."²⁰⁹ Shortly thereafter, the omens attending the birth of Augustus are explicitly compared to those attending the birth of Alexander.²¹⁰

In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus himself looks to Alexander as a predecessor on the one hand, and implies that he has outdone Alexander, on the other hand, by having achieved more at a younger age.²¹¹ Once he had secured his power, he was even proclaimed "Zeus Eleutherios" and a divine king in Egypt, much like Alexander before him.²¹² The comparisons are well-established, then. Their implication is that the Roman idea of the emperor as the son of a god bears an inheritance from Alexander that can ultimately be traced back to ancient Egypt in

205. Plutarch, *Alex.*, 2.4. Serpents appear to be an image suggesting the divine paternity of Alexander in Plutarch's narrative. See the serpents involved in Olympias's "divine inspirations" (2.6); cf. Arrian, (*Anab.*, 3.5): Ptolemy reported that serpents later guided Alexander on the way to Siwah.

206. Cf. *Alexander Romance*, 30 in Stoneman, 62: "He prayed and said: 'Father Ammon, if it is true what my mother told me, that I am your son, give me a sign!' And Alexander had a vision of Ammon embracing his mother, Olympias, and saying to him, 'Child Alexander, you are born of my seed'"; cf. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 15.

207. Plutarch, *Alex.*, 3.1.

208. Plutarch, *Alex.*, 27.3–6; cf. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 3.3–4.

209. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94.4.

210. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94.5; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, (*King and Messiah*, 53) also note these parallel birth legends as evidence that Hellenistic ideas influenced Augustus's appellation *divi filius*.

211. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 1.1.

212. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 143–44.

the same broad cultural milieu of the ANE within which the ancient Jewish concept of divine sonship also began.²¹³ Where in the latter case, divine sonship came to denote the Messiah, in Hellenistic and now Roman culture such language came to denote an absolute ruler of another sort.²¹⁴ I will return to this parallel at a later point; for now it is enough simply to observe that the divine sonship of the emperor owes something to the same historical stream described above in chapter two.

4.2 *Divus Iulius and the Origin of Divi Filius*

The story of how the Roman emperor became the "son of (a) god" properly begins, however, with the apotheosis of Julius Caesar, who was the first Roman ruler ever to be deified. Caesar's divinity was asserted to some degree even before his death in 44 BC. Lily Ross Taylor presents a compelling argument that Caesar actually intended to establish divine monarchy in his lifetime, having been "influenced chiefly by the traditions of the Hellenistic monarch handed down from the empire of Alexander" during his time in Egypt.²¹⁵ In any case, a controversial statue of him was erected in 45 BC bearing the inscription *Deo Invicto* ("to the unconquered god"), and even the Senate called him "Jupiter Julius" in the final months of his life.²¹⁶ The pivotal moment, however, was in July, 44 BC when a comet

213. Already, L. R. Taylor (*Divinity*, 1–34 on Alexander in Egypt; 35–57 documenting the entrance of the Hellenistic conception of the divine ruler into Roman culture) recognizes this historical inheritance. Taylor (1) writes: "Caesar and Augustus were the first real successors of Alexander, and to understand the basis of their power it is essential to go back to the monarchy of Alexander and to consider his position as a theocratic monarch and the tradition that he passed on to his successors"; cf. also A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 249.

214. L. R. Taylor, (*Divinity*, 144) even goes so far as to say Augustus was heralded "in terms of the Messianic ideas of the East," though she does not define these ideas and appears to conflate them overly so with Egyptian thought. Nevertheless, the similarity she recognizes between the terms used of Augustus and those used of the Messiah is not without basis.

215. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 58–77; quotation on 58.

216. Dio, *Roman History*, 43.45.3; 44.6.4; Cicero, *Att.*, 12.45.3; 13.28.3; Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 312; cf. A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult," 249. Additionally, see the evidence of several inscriptions in which Caesar is characterized as a god with saving attributes: τὸν ἀπὸ Ἀρεως καὶ Ἀφροδείτης θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τὸν ἀνθρωπίνου βίου σωτῆρα (SIG 760), "the manifest god from Ares and Aphrodite, and universal savior of human life"; Καίσαρα ... γεγονότα δὲ σωτήρα καὶ εὐεργέτην καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας πόλεως (IG 12:5, 556–57), "[The Carthean people honor] Caesar ... who has become savior and benefactor of our city"; see also IG 12:2, 35b, 165b; IGR 4:33.

appeared overhead for seven days during the very games thrown by Augustus in honor of Caesar's apotheosis, which was generally believed to be his soul ascending to join the gods in the heavens.²¹⁷ So it was that Caesar came to be "numbered among the gods, not only by a formal decree, but also in the conviction of the common people."²¹⁸ The Senate officially consecrated Caesar as *Divus Iulius* ("the deified Julius" or "the god Julius") on January 1, 42 BC, and the formal institution of his cult quickly followed with Marc Antony serving as the first *flamen divi Iuli* (priest of the deified Julius).²¹⁹

This official pronouncement made it possible for Augustus, as Caesar's adopted heir, to begin calling himself *divi filius* ("son of god" or "son of a god") soon thereafter.²²⁰ From 41 BC, onward Octavian consistently signed as *Imperator Caesar Divi filius*, well before the Senate bestowed upon him the honorific title "Augustus" in 27 BC.²²¹ After 27 BC, then, his official title became *Imperator Caesar Augustus divi*

217. Suetonius, *Jul.*, 88; L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 90–91; Simon Price, *Rituals and Power*, 72.

218. Suetonius, *Jul.*, 88.

219. Plutarch, *Caes.*, 67.4; Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 399; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 72; A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 253; Meret Strothmann, "Augustus," in *BNP* 364. In the overall scheme of Roman history, the advent of the ruler cult fits within the gradual tendency to consolidate power around solitary figures that characterized the latter days of the Republic. Though the Romans had held the idea of absolute monarchy in disdain ever since they deposed Tarquinius, they twice turned to absolute dictators to whom they looked as deliverers from times of civil war and disorder: first, in the case of Sulla in 82 BC, and again in the case of Julius Caesar in 49 BC (The level of disdain for the old monarchy is evidenced, for instance, by Cicero, [*Rab. Perd.*, 13] who attacks his opponent by comparing him to Tarquinius). Finally, in the days of the Empire, the emperor was viewed as the "embodiment and concentration of the authority" of the State (S. P. Scott, "The Digest or Pandects – Book XLVIII. Title IV: On the Julian Law Relating to the Crime of Lesse Majesty," in *The Civil Law, including the Twelve Tables, the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*; vol. XI (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 28 n. 1. Cited 17 September 2014. Online: <http://www.constitution.org/sps/sps11.htm>). On the one hand, then, the imperial cult emerges hand-in-hand with the natural progression of Roman politics. On the other hand, the cult was never purely political either (the sharp distinction between religion and politics is itself anachronistic to the ancient world), but so also Roman religion "was now reconstructed around a person" (Simon Price, "The Place of Religion: Rome in the Early Empire," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 14 vols. (eds. A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and A. Cameron; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10:841.). Thus, while the basic concept of the divine ruler cult was inherited from Alexander, Roman culture itself afforded the opportunity for the cult to pervade imperial society.

220. Noting the history of this appellation, see Strothmann, "Augustus," in *BNP* 1:364; A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 253.

221. According to Kim, ("Anarthrous": 229) "Octavian started using the name in 41 BC when he was first recorded, as a member of *Triumviri Rei Publicae Constituendae, Imp. Caesar Divi f.*"; cf. Victor Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus & Tiberius* (2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 32.

filius, or Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ υἱός Σεβαστός, as seen on the faces of many imperial coins and inscriptions.²²² This designation was more than a favorite title, however; Octavian actually took *divi filius* as his official cognomen, which was possible since his adopted father was then *Divus Iulius*.²²³ As often as he signed with this name and as often as it was uttered, Augustus reminded everyone throughout the empire that he ruled as the son of one now seated in the heavens.

If Caesar's deification paved the way for the imperial cult, Augustus subsequently became the cult standard in relation to whom future emperors measured themselves. Emperors following in his wake tended to take the specific designation "son of the God Augustus," as in the case of Tiberius, or Tiberius's adopted son Germanicus.²²⁴ Meanwhile, Caesar's apotheosis became a model for the deification of future emperors.²²⁵ Yet, whereas Caesar's deification was only formally recognized two years after his death, the Senate deified Augustus immediately.²²⁶ The rapidity of the pronouncement in the latter case demonstrates how firmly established the imperial cult had become already by Augustus's death in August 19, AD 14.

222. See the coins bearing Augustus's title in Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Iulius*, plate 29, coin no. 12; as well as inscriptional evidence in Ehrenberg and Jones, *Documents*, no. 108 (91), no. 105 (93); cf. A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 254; additionally, see the detailed discussion of Roman titles and names in Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 64–97. For further examples of the pervasive use of this title by Augustus, see: ἡ Καίσαρος κράτησις θεοῦ υἱοῦ, "The mastery of Caesar, son of God" (P.Ryl. 601; *PSI* 1150); *Imperator Caesar divi filius Augustus*, "Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god" (*SB* 401; *BGU* 628); Καίσαρος θεοῦ υἱός αὐτοκράτωρ, Caesar, son of god, Emperor" (P.Teb. 382); Καίσαρος αὐτοκράτωρ θεοῦ υἱός Ζεὺς ἐλευθέριος Σεβαστός, "Emperor Caesar, son of God, Zeus the liberator, Augustus" (P.Oslo. 26; *SB* 8824); Αὐτολράτορα Καίσαρα θεοῦ υἱόν θεόν Σεβαστόν πάσης γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἐπόπτην, "The Emperor, Caesar, son of god, the god Augustus, the overseer of every land and sea" (*IGR* 1:901; cf. *IGR* 4:309, 315); θεοῦ Καίσα[α] υἱός θεοῦ υἱοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Σωτῆρος Ἐλευθερίου (*SEG* XI 922–23), among others.

223. On the cognominal *divi filius*, see Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 93 n. 132, 94 n. 136. *Divi filius* is the shorter form of the full designation *divi Iuli filius* ("son of the god Julius"), but the shorter form was more common.

224. A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 254.

225. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 72–73.

226. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 100.4; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 73.

4.3 Defining the Terms

The distinction is sometimes implied that *divus* referred to a human to whom divine honors had been given: so, a divinity of lesser status than *deus* ("god"). Yet, the term *divus* was originally used interchangeably with the more common *deus*; according to Taylor, "its chief connotation was rather the connection with heaven—the sky" (a connotation appropriate, as it were, in the context of Caesar's apotheosis).²²⁷ As Price notes, "*divus* and *deus* were [not] two exclusive categories; rather, *divus* was a subcategory of *deus* and it was thus perfectly possible to refer to a consecrated emperor as *deus*."²²⁸ Only after the deification of Caesar were attempts made to use *divus* to denote specifically a god who had formerly been a human being; even then, however, the worship rendered to Caesar was indistinguishable from that rendered to other gods of the pantheon.²²⁹ Thus, *divus* did not denote merely a divine personage, but most definitely a god; and, likewise, *divi filius* did not designate merely the son of a divine being, but literally, the "son of (a) god."²³⁰

That is not to say that Augustus did not show great care (and political savvy) concerning the language applied to him during his lifetime. He would not be called *Divus Augustus* until after his death, and likewise sought to avoid (though unsuccessfully) the appellation θεός.²³¹ Instead, he promulgated his power through the title *divi filius* (or θεοῦ υἱός) while emphatically promoting the cult of *Divus Iulius* at the same time.²³² Despite these subtleties of terminology, however,

227. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 69; Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, 391–92; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 75; A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 254.

228. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 77.

229. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 96–98.

230. The fact that Latin has no definite article should be noted. While the designation *divi filius* is perhaps better translated "son of a god" to reflect the fuller form "son of the deified Julius," the definiteness of the term itself is grammatically ambiguous: thus, "son of a god," (indefinite) or simply "son of god" (qualitative). When the designation was translated into Greek with the anarthrous υἱός θεοῦ (or more usually, θεοῦ υἱός), this ambiguity is retained (see the further discussion of this point in the following chapter). Here, I have typically translated both phrases "son of (a) god" to reflect both of the possible interpretations the term could have carried.

231. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 75; Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 318–21.

232. Kim, "Anarthrous": 237; A. Y. Collins, "Jesus and the Imperial Cult": 256; Galinsky, *Augustan*

Augustus was often enough depicted on statues and coins as one of the Olympian gods, suggesting that the distinction between the divinity of the living emperor and his apotheosized ancestor was gray at best.²³³ In the Greek speaking world (where no equivalent of *divus* existed), Augustus was regularly called θεός, blurring the distinction all the more.²³⁴ Nevertheless, Augustus was not officially deified during his lifetime, and *divi filius* remained his most prominent designation, besides the name Augustus itself.

4.4 Identifying the *Divi Filius*

The use of the precise epithet *divi filius*, in fact, appears to have been limited to Augustus himself, for whom it served as a name rather than a title.²³⁵ As noted above, Augustus's successors tended to take the title "son of the god Augustus" rather than simply "son of (a) god." Tae Hun Kim demonstrates at length that two different patterns existed for the naming of Roman emperors, which he designates A DIVI F DIVI X and A DIVI X F, where "A" designates the current emperor and "X" designates his predecessor. Whereas Augustus typically used the earlier formula, however, Tiberius and his successors overwhelmingly used the latter, for example: Τιβέριος Καῖσαρ Σεβαστὸς θεοῦ υἱὸς αὐτοκράτωρ ("Emperor Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of god").²³⁶ As Kim argues, "The semantic difference between 'DIVI F AVG' and 'DIVI AVG F' seems trivial but the meaning is completely different. The former is the name of Augustus, 'son of god, Augustus' and the latter is the title of

Culture, 319; cf. L. R. Taylor, (*Divinity*, 90) noting how the glory of the cult of *Divus Iulius* reflected on Augustus; idem., (*Divinity*, 106) "Octavian at any rate allowed no one to forget his connection with Caesar and with Caesar's divine ancestors. He signed himself henceforth *divi filius*, son of god, in his official name and he issued coins with representations of Aeneas carrying Anchises from Troy."

233. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 79; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 327.

234. For example: θεός Καῖσαρ, "Caesar god" (P.Oxy. 257; P.Oxy 1266); Καῖσαρ θεός, "God Caesar" (P.Oxy. 1453; P.Lond. 192); ὁ θεός ἡμῶν Καῖσαρ, "Caesar our god" (P.Lond. 1912 = CPJ 153); θεός καὶ κύριος αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ, "Emperor Caesar, god and lord" (BGU 1197; BGU 1200).

235. See Kim, "Anarthrous": 225.

236. Kim, "Anarthrous": 230 n. 25; Kim cites extensive inscriptional evidence in support of his argument; for the inscription above, see SB 8317.

Augustus' successor, 'son of deified Augustus.'"²³⁷ Thus, Kim argues for the exclusivity of *divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱὸς to Augustus himself.²³⁸

The lack of evidence for subsequent emperors using this precise appellation is noteworthy, although one should note that the identity of the emperor as the son of a god is still implicit in the title "son of the god Augustus."²³⁹ The basic fact that the emperor was thought of as the son of a god is not diminished; however, the specific term *divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱὸς does appear to have been much more closely associated with Augustus personally than with any other emperor.²⁴⁰ This detail bears certain significance for discerning what connotations the term υἱὸς θεοῦ might have had in the mind of a Roman centurion. Augustus was, after all, the first and greatest of all the emperors, whose legacy became the backbone of the entire imperial cult. More to the point, Augustus was viewed as Rome's savior (σωτήρ): he himself was Rome's εὐαγγέλια.

4.5 The Son of God in the Roman Metanarrative

The divine sonship of Augustus was far more than a title (or even a name) found on coins and inscriptions; the "son of (a) god" was an ideal fixed at the climax of the larger Roman national myth—or, metanarrative. Rome had told a long story of conquest, expansion, and a destiny to rule the world; all the while exalting the

237. Kim, "Anarthrous": 233 n. 33.

238. Kim, "Anarthrous": 232, 237. Accordingly, in the case of the centurion's declaration in Mark 15:39, Kim believes that the use of υἱὸς θεοῦ would most readily call to mind Augustus himself, rather than the Roman emperor in general. I will explore this possibility further in the following chapter.

239. Tiberius comes closest: see above, as well as Τιβερίος Καῖσαρνέος Σεβαστὸς αὐτοκράτωρ θεοῦ Διὸς ἐλευθερίου, "Emperor Tiberius Caesar, new Augustus, [son] of god, Zeus the liberator" (P.Oxy. 240); [Τιβερίος Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Σεβ]αστοῦ υἱὸς [Σεβαστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς (SEG XI 922–3); Caligula, on the other hand is not afraid to deify himself, but does not utilize *divi filius* or θεοῦ υἱὸς (though he does call himself "Son of Augustus": νέωι θεῶι, "new god" (IGR 4:1094); Σεβαστοῦ υἱὸν νέον Ἀρη, "Son of Augustus, a new Ares" (CIA 3:444); Ἀρης υἱόν, "son of Ares" (CIA 3:444a); Claudius, likewise: θεὸς Κλαύδιος, "Claudius, god" (PSI 1235); P.Oxy. 713); θεὸς Καῖσαρ, "Caesar, god," (P.Oxy. 808; P.Oxy. 1021); θεὸς Σεβαστὸς, "Augustus, god" (P.Mich. 244); Nero: τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεῶν, "the son of the greatest of the gods" (IM 157b), etc.

240. See, after all, the presence of the term within the larger title of Germanicus, who was called Σεβαστοῦ υἱὸς θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ υἱόνος, "son of the god Augustus and grandson of Augustus" (Ehrenberg and Jones, *Documents*, no. 320 [p. 147].).

goals of peace (*pax*) and justice (*iustitia*) as the telos of this story. Thus, Rome sought peace and security through victory, believing that Roman rule would accomplish these things.²⁴¹ Yet, civil war, followed by the dictatorship of Sulla from 82–79 BC had stained the narrative of Rome's progress, while a second round of civil war between Caesar and Pompey in the 50s left it in tatters.²⁴² Finally, after Caesar's assassination in 44 and the ensuing third round of infighting between Octavian and Antony, the Roman people looked as they had in times past to the leadership of one man for stability, for peace and security.²⁴³ To a people desperate for an end to conflict, Augustus had the appearance of a true "savior."²⁴⁴

Perhaps it was because the Roman people were so "starved for peace" that they in fact deified it (*pax Augusta*) after Augustus's victory at the battle of Actium in 31 BC.²⁴⁵ During the Augustan age, in fact, many of the cardinal virtues of the Roman narrative were deified—including the 'goddess' *Iustitia*, as well as *Fides*, *Victoria*, and *Fortuna*—indicating the extent to which the reign of Augustus was perceived and depicted as Rome's golden age.²⁴⁶ Epictetus, for instance, states that as a result of Augustus's peace, "there are no wars any longer, nor battles, no brigandage on a large scale, nor piracy, but at any hour we may travel by land, or sail from the rising of the sun to its setting."²⁴⁷

4.5.1 Augustan Literature

Depictions of Augustus as the climax of the Roman metanarrative are most visible, however, in the literature of the period. Writers of the Augustan age

241. John S. Richardson, *The Language of Empire: Rome and the Idea of Empire from the Third Century BC to the Second Century AD* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

242. John S. Richardson, *Augustan Rome 44 BC to AD 14: The Restoration of the Republic and the Establishment of the Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 4–9, 35.

243. Richardson, *Augustan Rome*, 47–79.

244. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 229.

245. Per the suggestion of Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 288; cf. Vell. Pat. Hist. 2.126.3.

246. Anna Clark, *Divine Qualities: Cult and Community in Republican Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), *passim*.

247. Epictetus, *Disc.*, 3.13.9.

including Horace, Ovid, Livy, and especially Virgil universally present the emperor as the one who will bring Rome to its destined goal.²⁴⁸ In his ode "The Praises of Augustus," for instance, Horace declares, "O Father and Guardian of the human race, thou son of Saturn, to thee by fate has been entrusted the charge of Caesar ... second to thee alone shall he with justice rule the board earth."²⁴⁹ Jupiter himself is said to care for Augustus, whose just reign parallels the god's own. In this instance, Horace's words actually seem to imply a vice-regency of the emperor on Jupiter's behalf, not unlike the notions of divine sonship familiar to the ANE (see chapter 2).²⁵⁰ Likewise in his *Carmen Saeculum*, Horace prays to the gods that Augustus, heir of Aeneas, be allowed at this time to bring Rome to its awaited destiny:

If Rome is your handiwork, and if from Ilium hailed the bands that gained the Tuscan shore ... they for whom righteous Aeneas, survivor of his country, unscathed amid blazing Troy, prepared a way to liberty, destined to bestow more than had been left behind—then do, O gods, make our youth teachable and grant them virtuous ways; to the aged give tranquil peace; and to the race of Romulus, riches and offspring and every glory! And what the glorious scion of Anchises and of Venus [i.e. Augustus], with sacrifice of milk-white steers, entreats of you that may he obtain, triumphant over the warring foe, but generous to the fallen!²⁵¹

The prayer is more than a general plea that the Roman ruler be granted victory against his enemies; the petition is made on the premise that Augustus represents the goal toward which all of Roman history from its founding through Aeneas (the legendary ancestor of Augustus) has been headed under the direction of the gods themselves. The prayer for Augustus's triumph is one and the same as the prayer that Rome achieve its destiny.

248. See Wright, (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 298–311) for one of the fullest discussion of the Augustan climax theme in this literature of which I am aware. My own treatment in this section is particularly indebted to his insights. For a detailed further analysis of the relationship between Augustan writers and the empire, see John S. Richardson, *Language of Empire*, 117–45.

249. Horace, *Carm.* 1.12.

250. See Galinsky, (*Augustan Culture*, 318) for a further discussion of the identification of Augustus with Jupiter in Horace as well as Ovid.

251. Horace, *Saec.* 37–52, slightly modified from the translation by Charles E. Bennett, *Horace: The Odes and Epodes* (LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1914).

Yet, even such prayers pale in comparison to what one finds in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* proclaims the long narrative of Rome's founding and destiny more clearly than any other work of Roman literature, with Augustus himself placed squarely at the center of it all. Virgil began composing the *Aeneid* immediately after the battle of Actium in 31 BC as a martial poem for Augustus.²⁵² In it, he weaves together many of the themes found elsewhere in Roman literature and history to create a coherent epic of Rome's triumphant destiny, including Rome's founding, the deification of Julius Caesar, and the battle of Actium itself. In book one, Virgil describes the progression that he will unfold throughout the remaining twelve books: in brief, Aeneas's son Ascanius, also called Iulus, will found the city of Alba Longa, which will later become Rome under Romulus (1.270–77).²⁵³ From Iulus will then descend Julius Caesar, the deified adoptive father of Augustus (1.286–90). Under Augustus, at last, "the violent centuries, battles set aside, grow gentle, kind." (1.348–49).

The *Aeneid* explicitly links Augustus's exalted place in the Roman destiny with his identity as the "son of a god." In one of the one most famous passages of Virgil's epic, Aeneas travels through the underworld with his father Anchises where he is given a vision of the glorious future that awaits Rome, culminating in the birth of Augustus:

Now turn your eyes this way and behold these people, your own Roman people. Here is Caesar and all the line of Iulus soon to venture under the sky's great arch. Here is the man, he's here! Time and again you've heard his coming promised—Caesar Augustus! Son of a god, he will bring back the Age of Gold to the Latian fields where Saturn once held sway, expand his empire past the Garamants and the Indians to a land beyond the stars, beyond the wheel of the year, the course of the sun itself, where

252. Werner Suerbaum, "Vergilius" *BNP* 15:302–03; cf. Virgil's own account of his purpose: "Yet soon I will gird myself to celebrate the fiery fights of Caesar [Augustus], make his name live in the future" (*Aen.* 3.46–47).

253. Virgil, (*Aen.* 1.344) specifically describes "Julius" as "a name passed down from Iulus, his great forebear."

Atlas bears the skies and turns on his shoulder the heavens studded with flaming stars.²⁵⁴

When read in context, the injunction "Now turn your eyes this way," is likewise a call for the Roman people to turn their eyes away from Romulus, whose founding of Rome is the subject of lines 775–787. Thus, the effect is to subtly put forth Augustus as a second founder of Rome. "Son of a god," meanwhile, serves as more than a name: it speaks to Augustus's functional role in Roman history whereby he ushers in Rome's golden age.²⁵⁵ The narrative here is the same one underlying the *Carmen Saeculum* above.

Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to refer to this narrative under the heading of 'Roman eschatology.' More than one scholar has claimed as much already.²⁵⁶ After stating that he knows of no precedent for the sort of sweeping, teleologically oriented narrative one finds in the *Aeneid*, N. T. Wright moreover states:

I know of no signs that Virgil knew, or was echoing, either the shorter, ancient Israelite narrative or the longer, contemporary Jewish one. But to those familiar with either, his poem would have considerable resonance – as well, of course, as the dissonance both of a rival claim to world domination and of a radically different method of bringing it about.²⁵⁷

The comparison is noteworthy. The imperial ideology of Rome, not unlike Jewish eschatology, entailed a narrative culminating with the coming of a deliverer who could be called, in either case, son of god/God.

254. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 2006), 6.909–920; 6.788–797 in the original Latin. The divine lineage of Augustus is portrayed indirectly throughout the *Aeneid*—for instance, Aeneas himself is the "son of Venus," and is later called "son of the gods" (1.325; 10.276), and Apollo later tells Iulus "son of the gods, you'll father gods to come!" (9.731).

255. Evans, ("Mark's Incipit": 74) also comments briefly on this scene from the *Aeneid* in a similar capacity.

256. See the discussion in Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 305–06.

257. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 306.

4.5.2 The Roman εὐαγγέλλια

Rome's eschatological narrative was not simply a matter of poetic hyperbole by a few literary clients of Augustus, either. On the contrary, when one turns to some of the longer surviving inscriptions from the Augustan period, both the pervasive story told about him and the importance of his identity as *divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱὸς are even more overt. One of the clearest examples comes from the Calendar inscription of 9 BC, commonly referred to as the "Priene inscription," or "Priene Calendar inscription." As Graham N. Stanton explains, however, "'Priene inscription', is something of a misnomer," since in fact thirteen fragments of the same inscription have been found in five cities of Asia Minor, including Priene, Apamea, Maeonia, Eumenia, and Dorylaeum.²⁵⁸ Stanton further explains that this inscription was without a doubt displayed in many other locations besides these five, in both Greek and Latin, such that only the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* can be said to have had a greater impact on Roman culture in the first century.²⁵⁹ The subject matter of the inscription is, after all, nothing less than a proposal by the Proconsul of Asia, Paulus Fabius Maximus, to change the first day of the official calendar year to Augustus's birthday.²⁶⁰

The inscription entails two parts: the initial letter from Paulus Fabius Maximus, followed by the Provincial Assembly's reply, both of which are worth quoting at length for the insight and clarity they provide. The initial letter reads as follows:

(It is hard to tell) whether the birthday of our most divine Caesar Augustus spells more of joy or benefit, this being a date that we could probably without fear of contradiction equate with the beginning of all things ... he restored stability, when everything was collapsing and falling into disarray, and gave a new look to the entire world that would have been most happy to accept its

258. Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30.

259. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 30.

260. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 54–55, 106; Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 31.

own ruin had not the good and common fortune of all been born, Caesar Augustus.²⁶¹

Already, the now-familiar metanarrative comes into plain view. The basic premise for the change in the calendar is that Augustus's birth can, in some sense, be considered the "beginning of all things." This argument is comparable to the picture of Augustus as a second founder of Rome found in Horace or Virgil. The Assembly's reply, however, exalts Augustus even further:

In her display of concern and generosity on our behalf, Providence, who orders all our lives, has adorned our lives with the highest good, namely Augustus. Providence has filled Augustus with divine power for the benefit of humanity, and in him beneficence has granted us and those who will come after us [a Savior] who has made war to cease and who shall put everything [in peaceful order] ... And Caesar, [when he was manifest], transcended the expectations of [all who had anticipated the good news, not only surpassing the benefits conferred by his predecessors but by leaving no expectation of surpassing him to those who would come after him, with the result that the birthday of our god signaled the beginning of good news [εὐαγγελίων] for the world the came because of him.²⁶²

Though the term "son of god" or "son of a god" is not used here, it is perhaps recalled by the reference to "the birthday of our god." Moreover, the Calendar inscription is often compared to a lengthy, but poorly preserved inscription which does begin with the words, "Since Emperor Caesar, son of god, god Augustus has by his benefactions to all men outdone even the Olympian gods..."²⁶³ The cluster of terms that are found in this inscription, however, make the place held by Augustus, *divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱός in the Roman story abundantly clear. As Stanton observes, "[t]here is an unmistakable whiff of eschatology and of soteriology here." Indeed, the reign of *divi filius* is the gift of Providence; he is the benefactor of all humankind; the

261. Quoted from the translation by Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 31–32; for the original Greek inscription see OGIS 458.

262. Translation from Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 32; for the Greek inscription see OGIS 458.

263. *I. Olympia* 53 as quoted by Price, *Rituals and Power*, 55; cf. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 32.

Savior (σωτήρ) of Rome who restored peace; he himself embodies Rome's εὐαγγέλια.²⁶⁴

At last, the vast conglomeration of titles, inscriptions, coins, proclamations, and literature presented here demonstrates not only that the identity of the Roman emperor—and Augustus, in particular—as the son of a god was not only pervasive, but that it belonged to the climax of the grand story that Rome was actively telling about itself. This narrative was both eschatological and soteriological in the context of Rome's recent, war-torn history. As Kim also maintains, "It was not mere flattery when people called Augustus savior, lord, god, benefactor, etc. To the minds of ordinary people he was every bit what they called and praised."²⁶⁵ This is who and what *divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱός was to the Roman people (let alone, a Roman centurion). The motif was provided through Hellenistic ideas of divine kingship leftover from Alexander (themselves largely colored by those of Egypt); the opportunity was provided by Rome's own disorder in the face of its perceived destiny to rule.

4.6 From *Divi Filius* to *Divus*

One final question remaining to be answered is that of how the emperor, characterized as the "son of a god" (*divi filius*) came to be recognized as a deity in his own right (*divus*) in the understanding of the Roman people. A passage from Herodian provides an informative description of the process of apotheosis in Roman thought:

264. In regards to the connotations of εὐαγγέλια, G. H. R. Horsley, (*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978*, (North Ryde, N.S.W.: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1983), 3:13) states, "The usage of the neuter plural noun is clear: it refers to good news (often emanating from a monarch), such as news of their victories or benefactions; and in particular, the word is employed of the sacrifices celebrated on such an occasion." In keeping with the characterization of the emperor as σωτήρ, Evans, ("Mark's Incipit": 75) notes that on account of their divinity, "it was believed that the Roman emperors could in some instances effect healing"; cf. Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus*, 7.2–3; likewise Wright, (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 331) notes identification of the imperial cult with that of Asclepius, wherein "the epithet σωτήρ, 'savior' [was] transferred from the god of healing to the new god of empire."

265. Kim, "Anarthrous": 237.

It is normal Roman practice to deify emperors who die leaving behind children to succeed them. The name they give to this ceremony is apotheosis ... The body of the dead emperor is buried with a very expensive funeral in the normal human way. But then they make a wax model of him [and place it on a pyre which is ignited]. Then from the very top storey [of the pyre] an eagle is released, as if from a battlement, and soars up into the sky with the flames; the Romans believe it takes the soul of the emperor from earth to heaven. After that he is worshipped with the rest of the gods.²⁶⁶

Of the sixty emperors from AD 14–337, Price records that thirty-six were apotheosized, thereby receiving the title *divus*.²⁶⁷ Two immediate facts bear pointing out: firstly, that the emperor was never deified until after his death; and, secondly, not all emperors were deified.²⁶⁸ In other words, the mere fact of being emperor did not secure his place as a god. Despite the lack of distinction between the emperor's status as the son of a god and a god himself in the Greek world, Price states that "In Rome itself the official position was clear: the apotheosis of the emperor took place only after his death; this had to be officially recognized by the Senate, and only then did the emperor become a *divus* with an official cult."²⁶⁹

Moreover, apotheosis after death depended upon the successes and respect garnered by the emperor during his lifetime.²⁷⁰ Thus, Augustus was deified immediately; yet, even Caligula had difficulty in securing divine honors for Tiberius from the Senate, due to the latter's relative unpopularity.²⁷¹ According to Suetonius, Caligula himself insisted that he be addressed as a god in his lifetime, but, subsequently, he never was.²⁷² Claudius was deified after his death in 54 (though his deification was satirized by Seneca); yet, neither Nero nor the next three emperors

266. Herodian iv.2. qtd. in Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 56.

267. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 57.

268. Additionally, Price, (*Rituals of Royalty*, 57, 70) suggests that non-emperors, even members of the imperial family, were very rarely deified. Rather, apotheosis "was reserved specifically for emperors themselves in the line of Julius Caesar and Augustus."

269. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 75.

270. cf. Evans, "Mark's Incipit": 77–78.

271. Charlesworth, M.P. "*Gaius and Claudius*" in *CAH*, 15 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 10:653.

272. Suetonius, *Cal.*, 27.3.

after him were ever granted divine honors.²⁷³ Vespasian, who was by all accounts the most competent emperor since Augustus, was then the next emperor to be apotheosized after Claudius.

Again, this evidence would seem to suggest that apotheosis depended not only upon the emperor's position and death, but also upon his accomplishments. Such an inference accords well with the nature of imperial power in general. As Peter Oakes observes, "The Emperor does not slide unobtrusively into power, as he could if he felt that he acquired his power simply by right of adoption"—rather, his power must be legitimated through the demonstration of qualities appropriate to a ruler.²⁷⁴ Oakes identifies four basic characteristics taken to legitimate an emperor's power: namely, "abilities needed for the saving task; connections with previous rulers and the gods; universal agreement that a person should rule; [and] moral excellence."²⁷⁵ Just as adoption by the previous ruler alone was not enough to legitimate the current emperor's authority to rule, seemingly it was not enough to secure the emperor's apotheosis upon death either. One might say the emperor was expected to live up to the designation *divi filius* if the Senate and people were too recognize his deity afterwards.

Finally, the apotheosis of an emperor required the evidence of eye-witness testimony. Thus, Julius Caesar was deified largely on the basis of the comet that appeared during the games held in his memory. The deification of Augustus, however, established a more formal procedure.²⁷⁶ As Suetonius records, a former praetor "took oath that he had seen the form of the Emperor, after he had been reduced to ashes, on its way to heaven."²⁷⁷ The new emperor was also expected to

273. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 22, 25.5.

274. Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154.

275. Oakes, *Philippians*, 155–60. Quotation from 155.

276. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 73.

277. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 99.4. Prior to this statement, Suetonius (*Aug.*, 97.1) emphasizes the fact that

consecrate the deceased emperor as a god—indeed, it was in the interest of the current emperor's power to see his predecessor deified, thus reinforcing his own status as the son of a god.²⁷⁸ Ultimately, it would not seem too much to conclude that the imperial appellation "son of god" carried with it the expectation of becoming a god outright. Nevertheless, the official decree of the Senate rested on the reputation and achievements of the emperor, as well as the testimony of a witness.

4.7 The Evidence in Relation to Mark 15:39

Three basic conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented above in relation to Mark 15:39. To begin with, historically speaking, it is difficult to imagine that a Roman centurion could utter the words υἱὸς θεοῦ without thinking of the emperor (whether a specific emperor or the emperor in general). As Earl S. Johnson notes, after all, "[s]oldiers ... took religious oaths to the Emperor, praising him as a god or a Son of God."²⁷⁹ On the contrary, the most probable deduction is that the imperial cult would have provided the centurion's precise frame of reference for υἱὸς θεοῦ, per his cultural encyclopedia. That cultural encyclopedia has been described sufficiently here for one to ascertain the basic portrait of not only *who* (the emperor), but also *what* the "son of (a) god" would signify in the speaking of a centurion: a savior and benefactor of perhaps eschatological proportions, ruling on heavenly-derived power to guarantee order and peace, whose very arrival could be hailed as εὐαγγέλια.

Additionally, neither provenance of Mark's Gospel nor the geography of the events described therein should lessen the likelihood of such imperial associations

Augustus's deification was "foretold by unmistakable signs," thus highlighting the importance of evidence for apotheosis; cf. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 73.

278. Price, *Rituals of Royalty*, 81.

279. Earl S. Johnson "Is Mark 15:39 the Key to Mark's Christology?" *JSNT* 31 (1987): 12; cf. L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 57–78.

with υἱὸς θεοῦ. Philo of Alexandria, after all, is aware that the emperor could be called "savior" and "benefactor"; while both he and Josephus are aware that Caligula sought deification in his lifetime.²⁸⁰ More than likely, they had heard Caesar referred to as θεοῦ υἱὸς as well. Additionally, Joan E. Taylor has presented compelling epigraphic and numismatic evidence suggesting that Pontius Pilate himself was a strong supporter of the imperial cult.²⁸¹ Taylor, in fact, suggests that the final line of the famous "Pilate inscription" should be restored as "*divis*" referring either to Augustus, or perhaps Tiberius (officially known as *divi Augusti filius*).²⁸² If so, the case is all the more likely, then, that the centurion would most readily have associated υἱὸς θεοῦ with the emperor.

Second (and historically speaking, again), it is hardly any easier to imagine that Mark, encapsulated within the Roman world, as a subject of the empire, could be ignorant of the meaning these words would convey to (and from) a centurion. Third, Mark would not have expected his readers to be ignorant of that fact either. Some might, of course, object that literacy rates in general were low in the first-century.²⁸³ Certainly, the suggestion that Mark and his audience may have never read Virgil or Horace may be a reasonable one; it is possible that they had never read inscriptions such as the Calendar inscription above; however, the variety of evidence presented here, including titles, coinage, inscriptions, and literature is sufficient to demonstrate that none of these were isolated phenomena.²⁸⁴ Rather, they reveal an

280. Philo, *Flacc.* 74; cf. *Legat.* 148, 149, 218; Josephus, *B.J.* 2.10.1 §184; cf. *Ant.* 18.7.2 §256.

281. Joan E. Taylor, ("Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea," *New Testament Studies* 52/04 (2006), 556–59) begins by observing that Pilate, in contrast to his predecessors, had coins minted in Jerusalem bearing images specific to the Roman imperial cult (the *lituus* and *simpulum*).

282. J. E. Taylor, "Pontius Pilate": 565, see also 568, 570, 581.

283. These rates varied from region to region and according to social strata, reaching perhaps as high as 20 percent at times and as low as 5 percent in some of the provinces, but an average of little more than 10 percent can be assumed for the empire as a whole—see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

284. Though, see Wright, (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 307) who maintains: "There is every reason to suppose that an intelligent boy growing up in Tarsus, or for that matter in Jerusalem, would know at least [the *Aeneid*'s] main themes, if not its finer details."

omnipresent proclamation throughout the Roman world that no subject therein could easily have avoided, even if only by word of mouth.²⁸⁵ Literate or not, the case that anyone living under Roman rule would not have known that υἱὸς θεοῦ could function as a title of the emperor is the more difficult one to make.

Some commentators have suggested that Mark assigns a prominent place to the centurion's "confession" because of the dramatic irony of those words coming from a Roman soldier, of all people. Something along these lines may well be the case; and, yet, Mark may also aim to strike a much deeper nerve than has generally been supposed. Several questions remain to be answered, including a) what the centurion actually said; b) what made the centurion say what he said (about a crucified man, no less); and c) what all of this has to do with Jesus's messianic coronation that Mark seemingly intends his readers to recall from 1:10–11. To these questions and still others I now turn.

285. cf. Stanton, (*Jesus and Gospel*, 31) on the Calendar inscription specifically: "Literacy levels were low in Asia Minor, so only a small percentage of the population would have been able to read the lengthy inscription; even fewer would have been able to appreciate its rhetorical flourishes. But most people would have had a view about its message, for some cities did not in fact fall for the rhetoric and failed to adopt the proposed calendar reform."

CHAPTER FIVE: THE TRIUMPH OF THE SON

Truly, this man was the son of God!

– Mark 15:39

The centurion's words quoted above constitute the unexpected climax of what is perhaps the longest account of a crucifixion that had ever been written in the ancient world to date.²⁸⁶ The otherwise characteristically laconic Mark concludes his narrative by recounting the execution of its hero, Jesus, the anointed Messiah of 1:10–11, at the hands of the Roman Empire on the charge of claiming to be a king other than Caesar.²⁸⁷ But within a breath of Jesus's death, Mark awards the final word to one of Caesar's own soldiers who ascribes to Jesus an epithet common to the emperor himself. Thus, a strange story turns stranger still.

The rending of the Temple veil that coincides with the centurion's surprising acclamation of course recalls the reader to the earlier scene of Jesus's baptism when quite a different voice declared to him, "You are my Son" (1:11). The present circumstances of the cross could not appear any further removed from that earlier moment: a coronation, and now an execution. More precisely, however, the coronation of a king and a royal-claimant's execution. Kingship comprises the unitary thread between these two depictions.

286. Extended accounts of crucifixion from ancient Rome are virtually unheard of: see David W. Chapman, Eckhard J. Schnabel, *The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus: Texts and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). As Martin Hengel (*Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (1st American ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 10) explains, crucifixion was not considered an appropriate conversation topic for most occasions—the very word *crux* was considered harsh language (see Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 4.13; 5.15). Thus, Hengel, (*Crucifixion*, 28) observes that when retelling Plato's story of the "innocent sufferer," Roman writers typically leave out the account of crucifixion; likewise, Tom Thatcher, ("I Have Conquered the World," in *Empire in the New Testament* (eds. S. E. Porter and C. Westfall; Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 146) explains, references to crucifixion are rare in Roman documents and where such references do occur, the authors seldom provide any details about the practice of crucifixion.

287. On the likelihood that Jesus is executed on the official charge of *crimen laesa maiestatis*, see, for example, R. Larry Overstreet "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ," *BibSac* 135/540 (1978): 328; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 294, 317; Raymond Edward Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the Grave - A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:725; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 543–44; David W. Chapman, Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Trial and Crucifixion*, 238–39.

In light of this connection, one might initially feel justified in reading the centurion's confession from a messianic perspective, just as Jesus's divine sonship appears to connote his messiahship elsewhere in Mark (e.g., 1:1, 11; 14:61).²⁸⁸ The trouble is that such a possibility is, historically speaking, almost entirely implausible. On the contrary, historical sensibilities suggest that a Roman centurion would most readily associate the appellation υἱὸς θεοῦ with the emperor whom he served.

The historical question posed here is not merely that of what the centurion himself likely meant by his declaration, but also includes the consideration of Mark's intention in narrating these words. Simply put, the notion that a Roman centurion affirmed Jesus's divine sonship in either a messianic sense or in the sense of a full Christian confession (i.e., Jesus is "the Son of God") would not have provided a credible narrative for Mark's first-century audience.²⁸⁹ The question is not, as Earl S. Johnson supposes, one of the plausibility of a centurion forsaking his allegiance to the emperor, but more to the point, a question of the centurion's cultural encyclopedia: i.e., his total immersion in the narrative of the Roman imperial cult, within which υἱὸς θεοῦ functioned as an epithet for the emperor, over against his complete lack of a Jewish messianic frame of reference from which to ascribe divine sonship to Jesus.²⁹⁰ The centurion's cultural encyclopedia provides for little

288. As Kim, ("Anarthrous": 223) observes, "the recurring difficulty in interpreting the centurion's confession seems to arise from approaching the anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ from a Christian messianic perspective. The Christian messianic expectation speaks of one Messiah who is the Son of the one and only God, and thus any designation that refers to the Messiah has to be definite, for the Messiah is a unique being." For an example of this tendency, see Kingsbury, (*Christology*, 69–71, 98, 131) who argues strongly that Son of God functions as a messianic title in Mark's Gospel based on earlier passages (1:1, 11; 14:61), but does not distinguish the meaning of the centurion's use of υἱὸς θεοῦ from that of Son of God elsewhere in Mark; for a recent example of a messianic interpretation of Mark 15:39, see Strauss, *Mark*, 706.

289. The reading of the centurion's words as a Christian confession received its classic articulation from V. Taylor, *Mark*, 120–21; cf. the more recent treatments by Harry L. Chronis "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37–39," *JBL* 101 (1982): 97–114; Moloney, *Mark* (2002), 329–30.

290. Johnson, ("Mark 15:39": 13–14) rightly poses the question of what would have comprised a credible narrative to Mark's readers when considering the author's own intentionality behind the presentation of the centurion's confession. He concludes that Mark's audience would not have found credible the suggestion that a centurion essentially switched allegiances by effectively declaring that 'Jesus, not Caesar' is the Son of God. Neither does Johnson believe that the suggestion of a Christian

possibility of either a messianic acclamation or any type of Christian confession, and Mark's first-century audience living in the Roman world (whose own cultural encyclopedia overlapped with the centurion's) would have been cognizant of that fact. Assuming, then, that Mark wishes his narrative to be a credible one, he most likely does not intend for the centurion's confession to be read in either a Christian or Jewish messianic sense, both of which are historically precluded.²⁹¹

5.1 What the Centurion Actually Said

While the previous chapter established who and what *υἱὸς θεοῦ* might mean per its use by a Roman centurion in general, this chapter seeks to ascertain what *Mark's* centurion meant by so designating Jesus in light of that historical background. This quest initially divides into two questions: that of the words themselves, followed by the intended force of those words.

5.1.1 The Words Themselves

The foremost question concerning the centurion's statement is a grammatical one pertaining to the implications of the phrase *υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν* itself. The preverbal anarthrous predicate nominative which concludes this statement is both rare and somewhat ambiguous. Historically, many interpreters have understood *υἱὸς θεοῦ* in a definite sense on the basis of Colwell's rule. Yet, such a reading entails a misapplication of that rule. While Colwell states that definite predicate nominatives preceding the verb are usually anarthrous, several scholars have duly noted that the converse—that anarthrous predicate nominatives preceding the verb are usually definite—does not hold true.²⁹² Thus, Colwell's rule cannot be used to conclude that

confession would have been credible. Though I disagree with Johnson's conclusions (as will become clear), I affirm the logic of his line of questioning.

291. On this point, I follow the position articulated by Richard Burridge, (*What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004)) that the Gospels belong to the subset of the ancient genre of *bioi*, or biography; cf. Witherington, *Mark*, 5–9.

292. For the rule, see Ernest Cadman Colwell "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek

υἱὸς θεοῦ in 15:39 is definite, but merely opens up the possibility. Philip B. Harner's later study, on the other hand, provides a different insight: anarthrous predicate nouns preceding the verb function primarily to express the quality of the subject rather than definite or indefiniteness.²⁹³ In such a case, the interpretive question becomes one of the nature or character of the divine sonship that the centurion ascribes to Jesus per Mark's narrative, while the definiteness or indefiniteness (like the meaning in general) of the expression remains to be determined by context.²⁹⁴

As an initial consideration of context, then, the precise phrasing υἱὸς θεοῦ may provide a significant clue as to how this term should be understood. An examination of the syntactical patterns associated with the singular designation "Son of God" in the NT shows that the anarthrous reference is, first of all, quite atypical. To begin with, only two of the five occurrences of this designation in Mark lack the article: 1:1 and 15:39 (cf. 3:11; 5:7; 14:61).²⁹⁵ The paucity of references in Mark makes the unusual nature of the anarthrous occurrences difficult to observe; however, the atypicality becomes more apparent when one examines the NT as a whole, where only six of the 42 other instances of this designation lack the article (Matt. 27:43;

New Testament," *JBL* 52 (1933); for the clarification, see especially Harner (Philip B. Harner "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 92 (1973): 80–81) who observes that none of the seven other instances in which Mark uses this construction (2:38; 3:35; 6:49; 11: 17, 32; 12:35; 14:70) necessitates a definite reading, and in three of those instances (6:49; 11:32; 14:70) the context precludes a definite reading; additionally, see Johnson, "Mark 15:39": 4–6; Kim, "Anarthrous": 221–22; A. Y. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 93.

293. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous": 75.

294. So Harner, ("Qualitative Anarthrous": 80): "the word-order suggests that Mark was primarily concerned to say something about the meaning of Jesus' sonship rather than simply to designate or define him as the son of God at this point"; on context as the determinative factor Colwell, ("Rule": 20) himself qualifies his rule by stating that "if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun." Meanwhile, discourse analysis provides another possible explanation for the preposing of υἱὸς θεοῦ in this sentence. Levinsohn, (*Discourse Features*, 10, 29, 37) observes that while the default word order in Greek places nominal constituents after the verb, such constituents, when preposed, may be marked for focus—that is, "what is relatively the most important information in the given setting"; cf. BDF §472(2). Whatever the statement's meaning, there is little doubt that υἱὸς θεοῦ constitutes the most important information in Mark 15:39. While this insight does not address the lack of articles, one may state that the preverbal placement of the term itself may arise in part from factors other than the definiteness or indefiniteness of the expression.

295. Additionally, the plain ὁ υἱὸς is articular in 1:11; 9:7; and 13:32, and in 5:7 both genitives bear the article even with the vocative (so, anarthrous) υἱὲ (υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου). These instances highlight the atypicality of the pattern exhibited in 1:1; 15:39 all the more.

27:54; Luke 1:32, 35; John 19:7; Rom 1:4). Of these six, only the two occurrences in Matthew are instances of a direct ascription of the title to Jesus as in Mark 15:39; however, these also reverse the word order (θεοῦ υἱός), which places them in a special category to be discussed below.²⁹⁶ The basic conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that the anarthrous υἱός θεοῦ, on the one hand, entails a semi-anomalous deviation from the typical pattern for designating Jesus as the Son of God in the NT, while at the same time closely resembling the language of the imperial cult on the other hand.²⁹⁷

Moreover, the two instances of υἱός θεοῦ in Mark occur in the two contexts where "Son of God" might otherwise bear associations with the language of the imperial cult.²⁹⁸ Craig Evans has explored the striking use of imperial terminology in Mark's incipit by comparison with the Calendar inscription noted in the previous chapter.²⁹⁹ Mark 1:1 shares in common with the inscription the theme of "the beginning of (the) good news" (cf. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου; ἤρξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων), followed by name of Jesus in nomenclature resembling Caesar's own official title (cf. Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ; Αυτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ υἱός). In light of the overall rarity of the anarthrous υἱός θεοῦ in the NT, and its limitation to two contexts in Mark otherwise suspected of intentional imperial contrasts, I am inclined to agree with Kim that Mark has deliberately formulated this designation to mimic the imperial title in both 1:1 and 15:39.³⁰⁰

296. Of the remaining four anarthrous designations, however, none represents a direct ascription of this title to Jesus. In Luke 1:32, 35, Jesus is being described in an anticipatory fashion prior to his birth; additionally, in Luke 1:32, υἱός θεοῦ is again preverbal and its force is likely qualitative; John 19:7 is an altogether different matter since Jesus is not here being designated "Son of God" in any sense, but rather accused of making himself out to be "(a) son of God"; in Rom 1:4, again, the title being directly ascribed to Jesus, but Paul is describing his past designation as Son, seemingly by God himself. Without investigating any of these occurrences in greater detail, one may at least note that the context in three of these cases is substantially different than those in which Jesus is directly being called "Son of God." Thus, the references in Mark 1:1; 15:39 appear all the more unusual.

297. Kim, "Anarthrous," 222.

298. See Kim, "Anarthrous": 222, 224–25; cf. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 96–7.

299. Evans, "Mark's Incipit": 63–71.

300. Kim, "Anarthrous": 222.

The two anarthrous occurrences of "Son of God" in Matthew lend even more support to this possibility. Not only do both occur in Matthew's own crucifixion narrative (the latter being the parallel of Mark 15:39), but the unique word order in each instance matches the standard form of the imperial title precisely (so, θεοῦ υἱός).³⁰¹ If the latter instance is an example of Matthean redaction, then the possibility exists that Matthew has specifically altered the word order for this purpose. In any case, this formulation is not found anywhere else in the NT—save in a number of manuscripts of the present verse, Mark 15:39, including most of the Old Latin manuscripts.³⁰² The existence of such a variant suggests that some early readers of Mark may have understood the centurion's remark in light of the imperial title, just as Matthew perhaps did as well.³⁰³

To simplify this rather technical analysis of grammar, language, text, and context, the cumulative evidence suggests that υἱός θεοῦ in Mark 15:39 should be read in light of the imperial title. Syntactically, υἱός θεοῦ adheres to a pattern atypical of the NT, but reflective of the imperial cult. The contextual use of the term in Mark further suggests the possibility that this resemblance may be intentional. Finally, textual evidence and the reading of Matthew's Gospel alike suggest that some early Christian communities thought that mimicking the imperial title was exactly what Mark meant to do. In summation, then, there are strong reasons to suppose that Mark means for the centurion's pronouncement of υἱός θεοῦ to be understood just as historical considerations suggest he more than likely did mean

301. One may recall from the previous chapter that while the imperial title was occasionally written as υἱός θεοῦ, the more typical formulation was θεοῦ υἱός.

302. MSS D 565 ff2 i k q. According to Dölger, (Franz Joseph Dölger, *IXΘΥΣ: Das Fischsymbol in frühchristlicher Zeit*, 3 vols. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1910), 1:403–05) the most probable explanations for the reading θεοῦ υἱός are either that it reflects the language of the imperial cult, or its use in the acronym Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ; see also Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 96; idem., *Mark*, 768.

303. Cf. Collins, ("Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 96): "Those members of the audience of Mark familiar with the imperial cult would understand that the centurion recognized Jesus as the true ruler of the known world, rather than the emperor."

the phrase: as an attribution of the imperial title with all the connotations of *divi filius*.³⁰⁴

Mark's audience most likely would have recognized that a centurion was not any other soldier, after all, and would have had certain expectations regarding a centurion's mindset and behavior. The centurion's rank was a highly respected one within the Roman military—one which ordinary soldiers might consider the pinnacle of a successful career. Promotions to this rank were approved by the provincial governors, or in some cases by the emperor himself.³⁰⁵ As stated in the previous chapter, all soldiers were required to praise the emperor as either a god or son of a god (*divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱός). Historically speaking, then, the likelihood is high that a) the centurion acclaimed Jesus as "son of God" in the same sense of the term as applied to the emperor, and that Mark's audience understand this. Thus, Philip Bligh once proposed that the centurion's words represent "the final verdict in the words of the imperial title: '*This man, not Caesar, is the Son of God!*'"³⁰⁶ Bligh seemingly stops short of recognizing that υἱός θεοῦ in the speech of a centurion is an ascription of the imperial title, but he nonetheless observes enough overlap in the term to occasion a contrast between Jesus and the emperor. More recently, A. Y. Collins has stated a similar conclusion in a more refined manner: "Those members of the audience of Mark familiar with the imperial cult would understand that the

304. The evidence presented above raise one question, of course: why Mark employs υἱός θεοῦ rather than the more typical θεοῦ υἱός if his purpose is indeed to mimic the imperial title. A potential answer to this question may lie in the very fact that υἱός θεοῦ reflects a more Semitic naming convention, including the typical word order when designating "son(s) of God" (e.g. Gen 6:4; Deut 32:43; Pss 28:1; 88:7; Wis 2:18; 5:5; Pss. Sol. 17:27; Dan 3:92 in the LXX, as well as the above mentioned references in the NT). Mark's choice to retain Jewish naming conventions may reflect the fact that the messianic sense of Jesus's sonship remains primary for him; while effectively mimicking the imperial title (with a formulation known within the imperial cult), he still manages to keep one foot in the background of early Judaism. Thus, the inherent ambiguity in Mark's formulation of this title may coincide with the messianic/imperial contrast surrounding the term in his narrative.

305. G. R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 86; Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1974), 74; cf. Johnson, "Mark 15:39": 10.

306. P. H. Bligh "A Note on Huios Theou in Mark 15:39," *ExpTim* 80 (1968): 53.

centurion recognized Jesus as the true ruler of the known world, rather than the emperor."³⁰⁷

Not to forget the implications of the grammar explored above, however, the wording of the centurion's statement most likely implies that he ascribes the *essence* of υἱὸς θεοῦ / *divi filius* to Jesus, rather than claiming him to be the imperial figure himself. The effect is largely the same: to proffer Jesus as an alternative world ruler of soteriological and eschatological import. The slight difference to be observed, however, is that the emphasis falls on the connotations of the title ascribed to Jesus rather than on the personage represented by the title.³⁰⁸

Such a proposal raises certain questions, of course. It would make seemingly little sense for Mark's readers to believe that a Roman centurion or anyone else would claim that Jesus is an alternative world ruler when he has just died (on a cross, no less). In actuality, however, the use of the imperfect ἦν here implies a substantially different statement: "Truly this man *was* the son of God." Although some interpreters have read this verb as a present time use of the imperfect, this possibility is unlikely in view of the fact that the imperfect in pairing with verbs of perception (e.g., ἰδὼν) is generally limited to expressions of time previous to the perception itself.³⁰⁹ Additionally, one may compare the centurion's declaration with that of the unclean spirits in Mark 3:11: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, which demonstrates that Mark uses the present form of εἶμι when he wishes to express present time even

307. A. Y. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 96.

308. Hence why I have chosen to translate υἱὸς θεοῦ "the son of God" in this context. The typical translation "the Son of God" will not do since it implies a full christological title which is not in accord with the centurion's meaning; "a son of god," however, misrepresents the singular nature of this title/status as it was applied to the emperor; "the son of a god" might best reflect the meaning of *divi filius* from which the imperial title stems; however, such a translation does not do justice to the qualitative force of this construction, and it is also uncertain whether this nuance of *divi filius* would have been equally understood in the Greek equivalent; meanwhile, anarthrous "son of god/God," is simply awkward English; thus, I have decided upon "the son of God" in order to best convey the qualitative force of the imperial title ascribed to Jesus, while seeking to avoid all of the pitfalls noted above. I have retained the capital "G" in God to signify both the exultant quality and ironic force of the title ascribed to Jesus.

309. BDF §330; cf. Johnson "Mark 15:39": 7–8.

in direct speech. As Collins observes, "the present tense implies a confession that the author and audience also share[, while] the imperfect does not."³¹⁰

At last, then, the basic meaning of the centurion's words amounts to a declaration that Jesus was, prior to his death on the cross, "son of God" in the sense connoted by the language of the imperial cult, wherein υἱὸς θεοῦ functioned as an equivalent of *divi filius*, designating the emperor in his role as a supreme ruler of divinely based power, with soteriological and eschatological import. If taken at face value, such a statement is perhaps as exalted of an acclamation as a Roman centurion could have offered toward any person; however, it does not entail a 'confession' in the sense of an expression of the faith in Jesus that Mark's audience would have shared.

5.1.2 The Force of the Centurion's Acclamation

This statement itself is open to multiple interpretations, however. As Kelly R. Iverson recognizes, the centurion's words are ironic in any case; however, irony may be divided into at least two categories: dramatic irony or deliberate sarcasm.³¹¹ Some scholars opt for the latter in Mark 15:39 on the basis that such a genuine acclamation of this kind from a centurion is entirely improbable.³¹² According to this view, "Jesus' humiliating death on the cross disproves any claim he might have to be called

310. A. Y. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 93; so also Pesch, (*Das Markusevangelium*, 2:500) maintains that the use of ἦν limits the acclamation to what Jesus was in his earthly life, and so does not represent a Christian confession.

311. Kelly R. Iverson "A Centurion's 'Confession': A Performance-Critical Analysis of Mark 15:39," *JBL* 130/2 (2011), 331 n. 8.

312. So, Myers, *Bind the Strong Man*, 393; Juel, *Master*, 74 n. 7; Sharyn Echols Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel*, RNTC (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 162; Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: the Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (1st edition ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 252; Mark S. Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2002), 160 n. 28; Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, *The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 220–21; Geoff R. Webb, *Mark at the Threshold Applying Bakhtinian Categories to Markan Characterisation* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 185; cf. Johnson, ("Mark 15:39": *passim*) who does not explicitly conclude that the comment was sarcastic, but seems to imply this possibility when he doubts that a sincere profession of this kind would have been possible for a centurion.

a son of God" [from a centurion's perspective].³¹³ Such an interpretation initially appears to fit naturally within the surrounding context of mockery and taunts toward Jesus throughout Mark 15 (vv. 17–20, 29–32). Nevertheless, several features of Mark's narrative tell against this reading, which is perhaps why the majority of commentators have not subscribed to it.³¹⁴

Perhaps the most immediate indicator that Mark means for this declaration to be heard in a positive light is the final position it occupies in his crucifixion narrative. Numerous commentators have observed that this statement is the narrative, christological, and revelatory climax toward which the whole Gospel has been heading.³¹⁵ Presumably, Mark would not choose for the climactic sentence of his Gospel words which constitute no more than a mockery of Jesus. Iverson, in fact, presents substantial arguments that Mark 15:39 displays the characteristics of what Whitney Shiner has called an "applause line"—that is, a narrative indicator that the author anticipates a strong affiliative response from the audience at that instance.³¹⁶

313. Goodacre, *Case*, 160 n. 28.

314. For example, P. G. Davis, "Mark's Christological Paradox," *JSNT* 35 (1989): *passim*; Perkins, *Mark*, 724; Broadhead, *Naming*, 122; Whitney T. Shiner, "The Ambiguous Pronouncement of the Centurion and the Shrouding of Meaning in Mark," *JSNT* 22/78 (2000): 154–59; Evans, *Mark*, 512; Edwards, *Mark*, 479–80; France, *Mark*, 659–60; Boring, *Mark*, 433–34; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 769; Stein, *Mark*, 718–19; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 123–24; Iverson "Centurion's Confession": *passim*; Marcus, *Mark* 9–16, 1059.

315. E.g., Kingsbury, *Christology*, 14, 131–32; Davis, "Christological": 4; Broadhead, *Naming*, 122; Collins, *Mark*, 764, 769; Culpepper, *Mark*, 565; Bird, *Jesus is the Christ*, 39.

316. Iverson, "Centurion's Confession": 343; cf. Shiner, (*Proclaiming*, 154–59) draws on the works of ancient rhetoricians such as Quintilian, Lucian, Cicero, and Tacitus and identifies three characteristics of "applause lines"—in ancient rhetorical works, all of which are present in Mark 15:39. These include a) occurrence at moments of vindication or triumph; b) the use of "highly stylized language and/or creative verbal effects"; and c) occurrence at "natural breaks in the narrative." Admittedly, Shiner's first argument could be regarded as circular: whether or not the centurion's acclamation represents a moment of vindication is the matter in question; however, insofar as the possibility is entertained that this is an occasion of triumph, so also Shiner's first criterion is met. Meanwhile, the use of "highly stylized language" in this context includes at a minimum Mark's use of *σχιζειν* in 15:38, as well as the key term *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, and the interpretive clue *ἀληθῶς* (to be discussed shortly). In regards to the last criterion, see for example, Hooker, (Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991], 379) who observes the transitional effect of 15:40–41; additionally, the use of *δὲ* plus the imperfect *ἦσαν* in 15:40 together indicate the beginning of a new section, which is marked as "offline" or "background" material—see Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 80, 174–75; Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 44.

Second, the presence of ἀληθῶς may itself function as a guide word, or an interpretive clue, as to how Mark intends his readers to perceive the centurion's acclamation.³¹⁷ As Iverson also observes, ἀληθῶς / ἀληθῆς has an unambiguously affirmative force elsewhere in Mark (12:14; 14:70).³¹⁸ Thus, Mark may well have woven a positive metacomment on the genuineness of the centurion's declaration into the very words he speaks.

Third, Iverson maintains that "the depiction of the Roman centurion has a basis in the asymmetrical character portrayals [throughout] Mark's story."³¹⁹ According to Malbon, after all, Markan characters are primarily distinguished not by social group, but by each one's "response to Jesus."³²⁰ From this perspective, the unlikelihood of the centurion's acclamation and its placement on the heels of so many taunts and jeers toward Jesus are precisely Mark's point. All others, both Romans and Jews, mock and deride Jesus, but a centurion—quite possibly Jesus's chief executioner—speaks true: "this man was the son of God."³²¹ So for the first time in Mark's Gospel, Jesus's identity known to the reader since 1:1 is pronounced by another human being. Yet, the scene is still wrought with double irony: irony that a Roman centurion is the first to speak the truth; irony that he speaks more truly than he knows.

5.2 How Could the Centurion Say What He Said

Establishing that Mark intends to portray the centurion's acclamation as a genuine and climactic one, however, only reinforces the historical question of what

317. So already, Davis, "Christological": 14; Iverson, "Centurion's Confession": 335.

318. Iverson, "Centurion's Confession": 335.

319. Iverson, "Centurion's Confession": 339–41. According to Iverson, Mark attempts to "subvert stereotypical assumptions about the Roman centurion."

320. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 195–96.

321. Among the various duties a centurion could be assigned to was the oversight of an execution squad—see Tacitus, *Ann.*, 2.65; 13.9; 15.5; Pliny, *Trajan*, 10.77. Such is perhaps the best explanation for a centurion's presence immediately in front of (ἐξ ἐναντίας) Jesus at his crucifixion.

would have caused a Roman centurion to exclaim about a crucified, now dead, man that he had been the son of God during his lifetime. If it seems crass to speak of Jesus's death in such terms, I would contend that this event must be viewed in the harsh colors which always accompany death, to begin with, and crucifixion, all the more so, if one is to perceive the astonishing impact of these words.

Crucifixion in the Roman world was considered not only "cruel" and "savage," but the *summum supplicium* ("supreme punishment")—the very threat of which was deemed "unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man," according to Cicero.³²² Indeed, Roman citizens were exempt from this sentence except in extraordinary circumstances, such as high treason, desertion, or rebellion.³²³ Crucifixion was, however, a typical form of execution for slaves and rebels.³²⁴ The intended effect was not simply to painfully kill the victim, but more to publicly strip him or her of all humanity.³²⁵ For instance, Quintilian states that "every punishment has less to do with the offense than with the example ... when we [Romans] crucify

322. Cicero, *Pro Rabirio*, 3.10; 4.12; 5.15–16; idem., *In Verrem*, 2.5.168. Cicero's speech in defense of Rabirius no doubt contains certain rhetorical flourishes—yet, the fact that he is able to build a highly successful defense speech before the *populus* entirely around the offense of the cross indicates how horrific the cross was in the eyes of the Roman people; cf. Gerald O'Collins, ("Crucifixion" *ABD* 1:1208) who notes that "This speech reflected the horrified disgust which 'good' Roman citizens felt for any of their own being subjected to, or even threatened with crucifixion."

323. O'Collins, "Crucifixion" 1:1207–08.

324. In contrast to his condemnation of the threat of crucifixion against a Roman citizen, Rabirius, Cicero, (*In Verrem*, 2.5.9–13) in turn condemns Verres for *not* having crucified a number of slaves suspected of treason. Thus, the horror that he expresses over the cross in *Pro Rabirio* does not concern the practice of crucifixion per se, but specifically its use against a Roman citizen; cf. John Granger Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 65; see also David W. Chapman, (*Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 82) who concludes upon a comparison of multiple crucifixion texts that "crucifixion was often considered a penalty beneath the dignity of members of the higher Roman socio-economic classes." Thus, as Thatcher, ("Conquered," 146) explains, "This is not to say, of course, that Romans viewed such violence as beneath their dignity; Cicero [in *Pro Rabirio* 5.16] means, rather, that no citizen of the empire should be forced to play a part in the drama of destructive conquest that the cross represented."

325. See Alan Kirk, ("The Memory of Violence and the Death of Jesus in Q," in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* [eds. A. Kirk and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 192): "torturous deaths—such as crucifixion was—can be highly symbolized forms of violence ... choreographed to display and enact publicly the socially degraded status of the victim"; cf. Robert Cape, ("Cicero's Consular Speeches," in *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* [eds. J. M. May and R. W. Cape, Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 130): crucifixion "would have symbolically stripped Rabirius of his Roman citizenship and status as a free man, disgracing him and his family for generations."

criminals the most frequent roads are chosen, where the greatest number of people can look and be seized by this fear."³²⁶ Thus, the cross stood as a symbol of Rome's power, on the one hand, while reinforcing the lowly and degraded status of the victim on the other. As Hengel remarks, "A crucified messiah, son of God or God must have seemed a contradiction in terms to anyone, Jew, Greek, Roman or barbarian" who lived in that world.³²⁷

Therefore, the fact is all the more extraordinary that it is precisely Jesus's death on the cross that leads to the centurion's acclamation in Mark 15:39. The relationship between these two events is explicit and unmediated in Mark's narrative.³²⁸ Unlike Matthew, Mark presents no earthquake, nor splitting of rocks, nor rising of the dead from their tombs (Matt. 27:51–54), but in the most unequivocal of terms the death of Jesus alone constitutes the sole spectacle of the centurion's observance. The initial participial clause ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ provides a circumstantial frame of reference informing the verb εἶπεν that follows.³²⁹ Thus, Mark is clear that what the centurion sees accounts for what he says. What the centurion sees, then, is quite specifically the manner in which Jesus "breathed his last" (ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν). No matter how unlikely the case may seem, Mark provides his audience with no other option than to conclude

326. Quintilian, *Decl.*, 274.

327. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 10.

328. So also Brown, *Death*, 2:1144–45; Broadhead, *Naming*, 121; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 449; Boring, *Mark*, 432; Stein, *Mark*, 718.

329. See Stephen E. Runge (*Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010], 208–10, 243–49) on "frames of reference" and "circumstantial frames" in particular. Frames of reference are thematic grounding for subsequent clauses formed by clause-initial adverbs. Circumstantial frames are created by clause-initial anarthrous participles. According to Runge, as well as Levinsohn (*Discourse*, 183), such participles may be thought of as having been "annexed" to a finite verb somewhere in the sentence. The effect is to background the information of the participial clause to the nuclear clause that follows in this case: in this way, the participial clause informs the action of the main verb. Thus, while the participial clause is syntactically dependent upon the main verb, the action of the verb is logically dependent in some way upon the circumstances described in the participial clause. This is true even if the particular circumstance is a temporal one, as is most likely the case in Mark 15:39.

that it is something in the way the crucified Jesus breathes his last breath which motivates the centurion's utterance.

Seemingly, it is this unlikelihood that has puzzled many interpreters upon coming to Mark 15:39, whose commentary evinces a recurrent struggle to produce a further explanation for this scene.³³⁰ Among those who attempt to do so, a number of scholars have supposed that the centurion must have seen some supernatural sign to prompt his acclamation. In this vein, Raymond Brown posits that Jesus's final expiration in verse 37 coupled with the rending of the temple veil in verse 38 together may be subsumed under the "thus" of verse 39, and so account for the centurion's declaration.³³¹ Similarly, Gundry and Evans follow Howard Jackson in postulating that the force of Jesus's final expiration rends the temple veil in two, and that this sign along with Jesus's loud cry (which a crucifixion victim presumably could not have made under normal circumstances) motivated the centurion's exclamation.³³² A. Y. Collins, meanwhile, expands the range of causes a step further from the actual event of Jesus's death by proposing that "the centurion makes his acclamation in response to signs or portents that accompany the death of Jesus, the darkness over the land from noon until mid-afternoon and the tearing of the veil of the Temple" (vv. 33–38).³³³

330. This struggle, of course, already underlies the conclusions of those noted above who read the centurion's statement as sarcasm. Likewise, those who maintain that this is a Christian confession seemingly also suppose some divine insight granted to him (Edwards, *Mark*, 481; Stein, *Mark*, 718), or that the centurion's words function confessionally only on a narrative level, while the centurion's own meaning was simply that Jesus had a unique relationship with God (V. Taylor, *Mark*, 597; France, *Mark*, 659–60). Others analyze the confession only in terms of its effect in the Markan narrative, and so do not engage the historical questions of a) how a centurion could make this claim; or b) how Mark's claim that he did so could have been a credible one (seemingly Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 452; Boring, *Mark*, 434).

331. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1145.

332. Jackson, "Death of Jesus": 24–5; Gundry, *Mark*, 970; Evans, *Mark*, 512.

333. A. Y. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 94; idem., *Mark*, 767; cf. the earlier work of Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1896), 295.

Yet, each of these suggestions has the effect of doing what Mark's own narrative resists: that is, mediating the cause of the centurion's acclamation to varying degrees.³³⁴ While the effect of the proximate events in the centurion's experience cannot be discounted, according to Mark, the immediate cause remains the way in which Jesus breathed his last.³³⁵ Moreover, the first three explanations above do not penetrate to the critical question at hand, which is not merely *what caused* (i.e. what events precipitated) the centurion's acclamation, but rather *how could* a Roman centurion make such a claim about a man who had just died before his eyes. To reiterate the point *ad nauseam*, the question is what in a Roman centurion's cultural encyclopedia might have provided the frame of reference for such a statement.³³⁶

In answer to this question, I propose to work backwards from the historical evidence presented in the previous chapter. The vein in which one designated *divi filius* might come to be known as *divus* also provides the vein in which a recently deceased person might be said to have been "son of god" or the "son of a god" during his earthly life: that of apotheosis. Historically speaking, such a belief structure on the centurion's part more readily accounts for his claim than any other explanation—indeed, it is difficult to imagine what else in a centurion's cultural context *could* provide a compelling explanation.

This position was also the conclusion reached by Ezra Gould, and has more recently been advocated by A. Y. Collins.³³⁷ Yet, while both Gould and Collins argue

334. Though Brown (*Death of the Messiah*, 2:1145) believes οὕτως in v. 39 can be extended to cover the rending of the temple veil, this argument is unconvincing since, even if one is willing to suppose that the rending of the veil results from Jesus's final expiration, the rending would more properly be identified as the result of Jesus's last breath rather than the manner thereof, as indicated by οὕτως.

335. Though it is not clear how the centurion could have seen the tearing of the temple veil.

336. Admittedly, to engage such a question is to engage in a measure of speculation; and, yet, to fail to do so is to leave the work of interpretation unfinished in this case; *contra* Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1148; Boring, *Mark*, 434. Additionally, the line between speculation and historical inquiry is sometimes a fine one.

337. Gould, *St. Mark*, 295; A. Y. Collins, "Son of God Among Greeks and Romans": 94; *idem.*, *Mark*,

on the basis of the portents surrounding Jesus's death noted above, it may be possible to associate the centurion's belief in Jesus's apotheosis more closely with his last breath. The use of the rare verb ἐξέπνευσεν to denote what the centurion sees is unique to Mark (cf. Matt 27:54; Luke 23:47).³³⁸ Eduard Schweizer observes that this verb is characterized by

the idea that at death the vital force leaves the body in the breath.... But the parallels [Matt 27:50; John 19:30; Luke 23:46] show that there may easily be connected with this the idea that the true self survives death. This is to be found explicitly in Ev. Pt. 19 and the Syr. translation of Mt. 27:50 (ἀνέβη τὸ πνεῦμα).³³⁹

The suggested image of the vital force leaving the body in the breath occasions a certain parallel with the imagined upward ascent of the soul to the heavens per the Roman idea of apotheosis.³⁴⁰ Thus, in view of the facts that a) Mark alone links the centurion's acclamation directly to what is b) a verb that is quite rare in biblical and early Jewish literature, but c) typically Greek in character, and d) evocative of images similar to those associated with apotheosis in connection with e) a character in whose cultural background the death of one designated "son of God" could already conjure up the idea of apotheosis: the case may be that Mark believed such a notion to lie behind the centurion's words and sought to convey as much to his audience.³⁴¹

767.

338. Outside of Mark 15:37, 39, the only other use of this verb in the NT is found in Luke 23:46 (roughly parallel to Mark 15:37); however, the Luke's account of what the centurion sees is much more general than Mark's (τὸ γινόμενον [Luke 23:47]; cf. τὰ γινόμενα [Matt 27:54]). Also, cf. Matt. 27:50: ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα; John 19:30: παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα. Ἐκπνέω is not found in the LXX either, and only sparingly in Josephus (*Ant.* 8.273; 12.357; *B.J.* 1.272, 660; 5.517; 6.195) and Philo (*Pos.* 1.113; *Legat.* 1.125).

339. Eduard Schweizer, "ἐκπνέω," *TDNT* 6:452–53; Schweizer goes on to note that this verb is "typically Gk."

340. See both Herodian and the account of Julius Caesar's apotheosis in the previous chapter.

341. Additionally, Jesus's "loud cry" is the one sign mentioned above that has a strong claim of association with Jesus's final breath in v. 39: cf. ἀφεις φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν (v. 37) with οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν (v. 39). As both Gundry (*Mark*, 970) and Evans (*Mark*, 512) note, such a cry would not normally be possible for a victim of crucifixion; thus, Jesus's cry may have powerfully reinforced the centurion's perception of the event.

Even if this possibility is held in doubt, however, the fact remains that the idea of apotheosis still provides the most historically plausible explanation for the centurion's claim that "this man was the son of (a) God." While the notion that a centurion believed a crucified man to have been deified before his eyes may seem highly unlikely, one should note that it is no more unlikely than the case of a centurion calling a crucified man son of God (in any sense of the term) in the first place. Per Mark's narrative, his claim follows directly on the heels of Jesus's death just as the emperor's apotheosis would be expected to follow soon after his death. This parallel suggests all the more that the centurion's acclamation amounts to a juxtaposition of Jesus and the emperor in his thinking.³⁴² From his perspective, this man was in truth what Caesar claimed to be and what all of Rome proclaimed him to be: a supreme, divine ruler who represented soteriological and eschatological hope. His acclamation, then, should be understood as one of utter astonishment: the man whose crucifixion he has overseen turns out to rival, if not surpass, the most exalted figure in his world. In the centurion's eyes, the crucified has become the deified.

5.3 The Meaning of the Centurion's Acclamation

Up to this point, I have sought to establish what the centurion himself most likely meant by his declaration, while also suggesting that Mark and his readers were quite aware of his meaning. Now at last I turn to the pivotal question of what the centurion's acclamation ultimately signifies within the scope of Mark's narrative.

342. As alluded to in chapter 4, Kim, ("Anarthrous": 225–26, 237–38) believes the use of υἱὸς Θεοῦ would draw a juxtaposition between Jesus and Augustus specifically; however, even though *divi filius*/Θεοῦ υἱός was used as a name only by Augustus, it comprised part of the official imperial title for many subsequent emperors, including Tiberius. It stands to reason, then, that υἱὸς Θεοῦ could have just as easily functioned as a designation for the figure of the emperor in general.

To begin with, however, a word is in order about what this acclamation is *not*: namely, one should not suppose that the content of the centurion's statement is representative of either Mark's christology or that of his intended audience. Mark's audience has known from the beginning that Jesus is υἱὸς θεοῦ, and from the beginning they have seen/heard that title identified with Χριστός. Moreover, the present pairing of σχίζειν language with this pronouncement of Jesus's sonship recalls the reader to Jesus's baptism, where "You are my Son" indicates God's anointing of Jesus as Messiah. As argued earlier, then, messianic connotations govern the Markan understanding of Jesus's divine sonship—just as clearly as they seemingly cannot govern the centurion's acclamation. There is no reason, therefore, to suppose that Mark's readers would have accepted the centurion's notion of Jesus's divine sonship as their own, though they more than likely understood that notion.³⁴³

This stunning contrast, however, begs all the more the question of what *is* the intended effect of the centurion's pronouncement of Jesus's divine sonship in Mark's narrative. In answer to this question, I propose to retrace a series of natural implications that would have been apparent to Mark's first-century audience before arriving at a succinct conclusion. First of all, from the perspective of Mark's audience, not just anyone, but specifically a Roman soldier has just proclaimed Jesus crucified to have been deified through the ascription of the emperor's exclusive title. The rhetorical effect of such a pronouncement is not merely to exalt Jesus, but to *enthron*e him as a soteriological and eschatological ruler on the level of Caesar himself. Here, the dramatic irony noted above soars to new heights.

343. The idea of apotheosis, after all, would have been as blasphemous to anyone of a Jewish background as it was natural to a Roman. Additionally, acceptance of the centurion's meaning of divine sonship over that conveyed by the voice from heaven at Jesus's baptism would amount to privileging the voice of a Roman over that of God himself.

Along similar lines, Joel Marcus offers a compelling argument that Jesus's crucifixion is portrayed ironically by Mark as his royal enthronement in a manner that mocks Roman power. Intentional irony, or "mimesis," was a common feature of Roman punishments in general.³⁴⁴ For example, Suetonius records that Claudius sentenced a forger to have his hands amputated, while Galba likewise ordered a fraudulent moneylender's hands cut off and nailed to the table where he carried out his dishonest business.³⁴⁵ Thus, Marcus reasons that the visual irony of "bringing a person down by raising him up" not only would have been apparent to the ancient Romans, but indeed reflected the very point of crucifixion: to enact a parody of enthronement.³⁴⁶ This parodic function would explain the otherwise odd association of crucifixion with ideas of social promotion and/or enthronement found in numerous ancient texts.³⁴⁷ A passage from Dio Chrysostom, furthermore, explicitly describes the mock-enthronement of a prisoner condemned to die prior to his crucifixion:

They take one of their prisoners, ... who has been condemned to death, set him upon the king's throne, give him the royal apparel, and permit him to give orders, to drink and carouse, and to make use of the royal concubines during those days, and no one prevents his doing whatever he pleases. But after that they strip and scourge him and then hang him.³⁴⁸

By comparison, Jesus is never once called a king in the Gospel of Mark until chapter 15, wherein he is referred to as such six times in thirty verses: three times by Pilate (vv. 2, 9, 12), twice by mockers (vv. 18, 32), and finally on the *titulus* above the cross (15:26).³⁴⁹ Thus, Jesus's crucifixion is itself the climax of a dramatic mockery in

344. Joel Marcus "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125/1 (2006): 79–82.

345. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 15.2; idem., *Galba*, 9.1.

346. Marcus, "Crucifixion": 78; cf. Iverson, ("Centurion's Confession": 346–47) in support of Marcus.

347. Several examples provided by Marcus, "Crucifixion": 75–7.

348. Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 4.67–70 as quoted by Marcus, "Crucifixion": 85.

349. Cf. Marcus, "Crucifixion": 73; Iverson, "Centurion's Confession": 346.

which Roman authorities attempt to parody his royal claim.³⁵⁰ As Marcus observes: "The danger of parody, however, is that it may turn into reality."³⁵¹

To transform parody into reality, I would suggest, is precisely the rhetorical effect of the centurion's acclamation in Mark 15:39.³⁵² The climax of Rome's parody becomes the subject of a greater mockery still. The instrument of dehumanization is toppled and recast into a image of deification: not the literal moment of Jesus's deification (as the centurion himself probably supposed), but nevertheless the first moment in Mark's Gospel in which any human being explicitly acknowledges Jesus's divinity.³⁵³ Here, in fact, the irony of the Gospel reaches its full stature: it is an irony that Jesus's own executioner is the first to proclaim him to be in truth no less than what he is crucified for allegedly claiming to be; irony that a member of the hostile power standing in opposition to God's Messiah is the first to acknowledge the crown on his head; irony that the Roman *crux* marks the triumph of a King.³⁵⁴

The true parody, on the other hand, is in the immediate sense transferred to Rome itself. Indeed, parody is seemingly not a strong enough word for the scorn and judgment heaped upon the model of power wielded by Rome, embodied in the practice of crucifixion. In the cross of Christ, the very drama of imperial conquest for which the cross stood is undone; and so in the pronouncement of one of the

350. Cf. Thatcher, ("Conquered," 145): "Roman crucifixion was not simply an act of extreme violence but also a form of 'ritualized remembrance,' a dramatic reenactment of Rome's conquest of the world."

351. Marcus, "Crucifixion": 76.

352. Cf. Iverson, ("Centurion's Confession": 346) who reasons that "the audience discerns a profound irony [in the centurion's confession]: Jesus is a king, but he reigns not through self-aggrandizement or worldly displays of power but through humble service and the giving of his life (8:35; 10:42–45)."

353. As most notably observed by Kingsbury, (*Christology*, 14); but noted by most commentators as well.

354. On a side note, Rome's opposition to Jesus may be symbolically represented in the phrase ἐξ ἐναντίας. While this phrase expresses where the centurion stands in spatial relation to Jesus, on the one hand, the same phrase can metaphorically denote the hostile stance of one entity toward another entity: see BDAG, s. v. ἐναντίας; e.g. Josh 8:11; Jdg 1:10; 9:17; 20:34; 1 Sam 17:2, 8; 2 Sam 10:9–10; 11:15; 18:6; 1 Ki 20:10; 21:27; 1 Chr 19:11, 17; 1 Macc 4:12; 10: 48; Wis 4:20; Tit 2:8.

emperor's own men that *this* man is the son of God, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ overwhelms the gospel of Caesar.³⁵⁵

In this way, Psalm 2—the avenue through which Jesus's divine sonship is first interpreted in Mark—comes to life. "The kings of the earth [have taken] their stand and the rulers [have conspired] against YHWH and his anointed," but from the final perspective of Mark's narrative, upon Jesus's crucifixion, "He who sits in the heavens [indeed] laughs; YHWH mocks them" (Ps 2:2, 4). As A. Y. Collins maintains that Jesus's baptism scene is an "actualization of Ps 2:7," there is a sense in which Mark's entire Gospel becomes an actualization of the entirety of Psalm 2 in light of the centurion's acclamation that Jesus is indeed who he was said to be upon rising up from the waters of the Jordan.³⁵⁶ I do not mean to suggest at this time that Mark consciously frames his narrative in the terms of Psalm 2; such an assertion would require further research beyond the constraints of this project.³⁵⁷ But one can truly say that the end of Jesus's earthly career in Mark has not left behind the thematic scene of Psalm 2 from which his earthly career began.

Likewise, it appears that Mark's narrative has not left the scene of Jesus's enthronement, either. The mutual context of the acclamations of Jesus's sonship at both his baptism and crucifixion reveals itself to be that of kingship. It is a striking fact, then, that the *inclusio* of Mark 1:10–11 and 15:38–39 is tied together not only by shared imagery, terminology, and diction, but as the two scenes in the Gospel most

355. See again Thatcher, ("Conquered," 140–45) on crucifixion as "a carefully staged drama that publicly proclaimed the gospel of conquest."

356. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 150.

357. This possibility is intriguing, however, in light of the study by Rikk E. Watts "The Lord's House and David's Lord: The Psalms and Mark's Perspective on Jesus and the Temple," *BibInt* 15 (2007): 307–22. Watts observes that the influence of the Psalms is second only to that of Isaiah in Mark, while Psalm 2 itself "is central to the two divine attestations, both of which set the tone for the sections they introduce, respectively, Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom's powerful presence and his 'cruciform' journey to Jerusalem" (308). If Watts is correct, then Psalm 2 could easily be somewhere on Mark's mind in chapter 15 as well.

vividly surrounded by the themes of kingship and enthronement.³⁵⁸ If Jesus's baptism was his anointing, the cross is the place where he well and truly takes his seat on the throne.³⁵⁹ Through Mark's royal Son of God *inclusio*, the main body of his entire Gospel is revealed to be the coronation procession of Jesus on his way to become king: Χριστός υἱὸς θεοῦ, even in the face of the Roman emperor.

Such is the revelation signified by the rending of the Temple veil preceding the centurion's words: that the king is now seated on his throne and the old cosmic order has now been toppled. The rending of the Temple veil is widely understood as a cosmological sign in the tenor of Jewish apocalypticism.³⁶⁰ As Daniel M. Gurtner observes, the veil symbolized a reality beyond itself just as "the temple itself was considered a gateway from earth to heaven."³⁶¹ The rending of the veil, then, like the rending of the heavens before it, literally 'unveils' the operation of "a supernatural world" behind the happenings of the tangible world.³⁶² The immediate victory over Rome's imperial power signified by the centurion's acclamation therefore indicates a larger victory of cosmic proportions affected by the enthronement of God's King. Just as the imperial power embodied in the Roman cross finds itself upended, so also the cosmic powers of chaos exemplified by Roman power have been unseated by the installment of the Messiah.³⁶³

358. Where as these themes lie in the background of Jesus's baptism, however, they are displayed prominently in the foreground at his crucifixion.

359. Cf. Caneday, ("Baptism and Crucifixion": 73–85) who also characterizes Jesus's baptism and crucifixion as his anointing and enthronement. While similar, my own proposal is slightly different in that I would characterize the anointing of 1:10–11 and the acknowledgement of Jesus on the throne in 15:38–39 as the two ends of one and the same coronation ceremony.

360. So Perkins, *Mark*, 724; Gurtner, "Rending": 292–306; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 764; A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 133.

361. Gurtner, "Rending": 299–300. Quotation from 300.

362. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 6; cf. Gurtner, "Rending": 298.

363. In keeping with both this theme and the congruency between the occasion of Mark 15:38–39 and the expectation of Psalm 2, Marcus, (*Way of the Lord*, 62) observes that the opposition to God and his Messiah in Psalm 2 is sometimes taken to transcend the merely human. "The rebellious nations are the political expressions of these demonic forces, the memory of whose losing battle against God was probably preserved in the liturgy of the Israelite autumn festival. The rhetorical question that opens the psalm expresses the central dilemma that would so occupy later apocalyptic thinkers: How could

In closing, one finally wonders what to make of the centurion's strange declaration. In a single phrase, perhaps one can now speak of the centurion's ironic 'coronation announcement.' If the words of the voice from heaven, "You are my Son" signify God's anointing of Jesus as King, then the centurion's acclamation signifies the first human cry of affirmation from the nations that are to become his inheritance (Ps 2:8) that this is indeed true. Articulated in these words, then, is the essence of the triumph of the Son over all powers earthly and cosmic.

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. This, I believe, is the thousand-word image Mark's readers would have perceived when a Roman centurion proclaimed: "Truly, this man was the son of God."

the anti-God forces, which were supposed to have been defeated by God at the creation, dare to rear their ugly heads again and challenge God's sovereignty?"

CONCLUSION: SONS OF GOD IN RESOLUTION

Αὕτη ἡ κωμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρκετὴ μεγάλη τοῖς δυσὶ ἐξ ἡμῶν.

– An ancient Koine translation of an old American Western

The story of the Son of God in the Gospel of Mark properly begins with the story of the "son of god" surrounding Mark. The latter is a story with its origins in the ancient Near East where kings, such as the Egyptian pharaoh, were commonly called 'sons of god' in some form or fashion so as to intimate a sort of vice-regency. The particular conceptualizations of this divine sonship differed from one culture to the next, of course, but the overarching notion of vice-regency remains consistent. As the son of a god, the king's rule was not only divinely legitimated, but divinely empowered to affect cosmic order and stay the powers of chaos on the deity's behalf. Thus, the depiction of the king's sonship proclaimed an implicit narrative of hope for those whom he ruled.

From within this broad milieu of ancient Near Eastern kingship, two currents of interest to Mark emerge over time. First, one encounters the Judaic stream in which YHWH himself rules and achieves victory over rebellious kings, nations, and powers through the establishment of the Davidic king as his son (as in Psalm 2). Some centuries later, then, one encounters a second current: the Hellenistic one propelled by Alexander the Great, who affords a second life to the old Egyptian ideas of divine kingship upon becoming pharaoh: thus, "son of Ammon," and thereby also "son of Zeus."

As though on parallel tracks, both streams then seemingly pass through what might be called 'eschatolog-izing' rapids during the century or so leading up to the Gospel of Mark. The early Jewish current develops into a messianic one: the son of God is now the anticipated king through whom YHWH will achieve his final victory

over every rebellious power once and for all—including the empires of the earth who stand opposed to him. Within the same span of time, however, Alexander's legacy is picked up by another "son of god": Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome. Within the Roman metanarrative, the imperial son of god attains scarcely any less eschatological or soteriological momentum than does the Jewish messianic son of God. By the birth of Jesus in the days of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), and well by the time Mark writes ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ, the tension has already mounted: the collision course has been set, even if silently. The κόσμος will prove too small for two sons of God.

Whatever tension surrounds "Son of God" in the Gospel of Mark, then, is not in the first place one of author's own making. Rather, Mark is a witness to a historically shaped tension already present between Jewish messianism and Roman imperial ideology in the first century AD. Initially, one can agree with the words of Adolf Deissmann from over a century ago: "there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where [Septuagint or Gospel terminology] happen to coincide [with imperial concepts] which sounded the same or similar."³⁶⁴ Yet, in the case of υἱὸς θεοῦ, the concepts did not merely sound similar, but were similar in important respects. Moreover, while Deissmann correctly observes the implicit polemic in play, the question remains as to how conscious of that implicit polemic the NT authors (including Mark) were, and how much of the implicit each one purposes to make explicit.

³⁶⁴. Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), 342.

6.1 A Chapter by Chapter Summary of this Thesis

In the introduction to this thesis, I began by observing that the surrounding conflict between messianism and imperial ideology is already echoed in Mark's opening proclamation of "good news" centered around a "Son of God." His Isaianic gospel is breathed into an atmosphere permeated by the gospel of Caesar. Markan scholarship has in fact observed a degree of tension in the Gospel's leitmotif of Jesus's divine sonship itself. While most scholars agree that the connotations of Son of God are primarily messianic in Mark (especially at Jesus's baptism), a number of scholars have observed that it is more natural to assume imperial (as opposed to messianic) connotations of the title when spoken by the Roman centurion in 15:39. The fact that these opposing associations are most readily observable in two passages that are elsewhere widely thought to form an *inclusio* (1:10–11 / 15:38–39), moreover, not only intensifies the contrast, but points to the intention of the author himself. Simply put, through the use of this vivid rhetorical device, Mark appears to purposefully highlight the implicit tension between Jewish messianism and Roman imperial ideology that surrounds υἱὸς θεοῦ. The question, on the other hand, is why he does so, and to what effect, ultimately. In response, I proposed that at least one intended effect of Mark's juxtaposition may well be to demonstrate how Jesus the Messiah effectively conquers the Roman emperor.

By way of prelude to the Gospel of Mark itself, Chapter Two retraced the first half of the history summarized above with an immediate view toward illuminating the meaning of "You are my son" in Psalm 2:7, from which the language of divine sonship enters Mark's baptismal account. On the one hand, this chapter demonstrated the widespread and consistent depiction of ancient Near Eastern kings as 'son of god' to convey a broad motif of vice-regency. At the same time, the

declaration "You are my son" in Psalm 2:7 was shown to be a coronation pronouncement signifying the enthronement of the Davidic king via legal adoption by YHWH. The purpose of the sonship described here is similar to what is found elsewhere in the ANE: the enthronement of the king as God's son is his answer to the problem of rebellious and unjust powers—explicitly, foreign kings and empires.

Chapter Three then explored the operation of Psalm 2:7 alongside the several allusions to Isaiah in Mark 1:10–11. During the Second-Temple period, both Psalm 2 and the appellation "son of God" were developed messianically in nearly all of the texts in which either one is found. In the present context, the messianic reading of "You are my son" is strengthened all the more by its combination with other likely messianic features drawn from versions of Isaiah 42:1. Thus, the pronouncement of Jesus's sonship at his baptism is in all likelihood intended to communicate his anointing as God's Messiah. But through Scriptural allusions, Mark depicts the scene of this pronouncement as that of the Isaianic new exodus, which culminates with the defeat of all God's adversaries, including foreign nations. At the same time, several of the Second-Temple texts which read Psalm 2 messianically (sometimes in conjunction with Isa 42:1) do so in a fashion overtly polemical against Rome. These texts demonstrate that the underlying tension described above was at least sometimes brought right to the surface in early Jewish messianism. Additionally, the messianic reading of Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 in further pairing with the portrayal of Isaiah's new exodus in Mark 1:10–11 strongly suggests that Mark views Jesus's messianic coronation as a polemical occasion anticipating the defeat of God's adversaries, including foreign nations. Just as some of his roughly-contemporary compatriots identified Rome in particular on the receiving end of a messianic polemic, Mark's messianic cross-reading of some of the same texts raises a serious

question as to whether he might be up to something similar. Finally, several features of Mark 1:10–11 point the reader forward to the scene of Jesus's crucifixion in 15:38–39, where the final pronouncement of Jesus's sonship is uttered by none other than a Roman centurion.

Illuminating just what the title υἱὸς θεοῦ would have signified in the mind of a Roman centurion was the primary goal of Chapter Four, which retraced the second half of the history sketched above from the exact place where Chapter Two ended. From the Augustan age forward, the depiction of the emperor as the son of a god (*divi filius* / θεοῦ υἱός) occupied a central position in the metanarrative of Rome's destiny for glory. According to this picture, the 'son of god' was not only Jupiter's vice-regent, for instance, but also Rome's savior and eschatological deliverer: the one in whom Rome's triumph would be realized. This pervasive narrative was so thoroughly woven into the fabric of imperial Roman culture—including literature, inscriptions, coinage, art, and architecture—that it is difficult to believe that a Roman centurion could have uttered the words above without the emperor somewhere on his mind. Moreover, it is doubtful whether that fact would have been lost on anyone living under Roman rule, including Mark and his first-century audience.

Chapter Five thus began by considering the question of what would have provided a credible narrative for Mark's original audience. In light of the history sketched in chapter four, the traditional interpretations of the centurion's declaration as a messianic or Christian confession seemingly would not have done so. Several features of grammar, syntax, and context, moreover, demonstrate that the centurion's words resemble the formulation of the imperial title more closely than the typical formulations of the christological title "Son of God" in the NT. These details suggest something of not only the centurion's meaning, but also Mark's

intention as an author. Additionally, a variant reading of Mark 15:39 and the Matthean parallel indicate that some of the earliest readers of Mark's Gospel interpreted the title ascribed to Jesus in precisely this manner. Despite the misgivings of some scholars, Mark's narrative gives every suggestion that the centurion's acclamation is a sincere one: an occasion of dramatic irony rather than sarcasm. The most plausible explanation for the centurion's declaration that Jesus was "son of God" during his earthy life, then, is that the manner of Jesus's death convinces him that Jesus has been apotheosized after the manner of the Roman emperors themselves. The centurion ultimately appears to ascribe divine sonship to Jesus in the sense of a supreme, eschatological and soteriological ruler whom he believes to be divine.

At last, Chapter Five analyzed the effect of the centurion's acclamation in Mark's narrative. In the immediate sense, the crucified Jesus is pronounced divine and symbolically enthroned as king. Thus, tragedy is hereby transformed into "gospel," and Rome's parody is forced back upon itself. When the final declaration, "Truly, this man was the son of God" is read in juxtaposition with the earlier pronouncement, "You are my Son" at Jesus's baptism, the *inclusio* of 1:10–11/15:38–39 as a whole reveals the entire earthly career of Jesus to be the story of how he comes to be seated upon his throne, and how God's Messiah therein triumphs over every power earthly and cosmic.

6.2 Implications

In answer to the question posed above, then, the rhetorical shape of Mark's narrative suggests that he deliberately makes the implicit conflict between the Messiah and the emperor explicit in his Gospel. The intentionality of the author is perceptible not only in his particular narration of the centurion's acclamation, but

also is the resonances of the texts he draws together around Jesus's messianic anointing, and most vividly so in his decision to project these two pronouncements of Jesus's royal divine sonship onto one another through the *inclusio* of 1:10–11/15:38–39. The anticipated defeat of God's adversaries looming just to the right of the stage at Jesus's baptism stands front and center in the inversion of Roman triumph at Jesus's crucifixion; likewise, the centurion's acknowledgement of Jesus's identity as son of God and king affirms and actualizes all that is implied by the declaration from heaven: "You are my Son."

Mark's anti-Roman polemic is real, then. Yet, it remains secondary to Mark's christology. The primary purpose of the Gospel of Mark is not, after all, to proclaim doom to the Roman empire, but to proclaim the gospel of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, whose enthronement via the cross signifies God's victory over every power (Rome included). In the world shared by Mark and his first-century audience, however, Rome was the inescapable power dominating not only the physical geography, but also the ideological landscape as far as anyone could see. In terms of Psalm 2, Rome's empire stood at the forefront of those nations in opposition to God's reign; thus, Rome presented a problem which any would-be Messiah would be expected to address. To put the matter differently, if God really was to achieve victory over every adversarial power earthly and cosmic through the Messiah, any messianic victory that failed to deal with Rome would seem glaringly incomplete. Perhaps that is why Second-Temple texts like the *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, and *4 Ezra* each anticipate the Messiah's defeat of Rome in particular alongside their messianic readings of Psalm 2.

For Mark, however, Rome itself is not the enemy *par excellence*, but rather the symbol *par excellence*: the most immediate and prominent representative of the

powers whom the Messiah has conquered and will conquer. In displaying Jesus's victory over Rome and over the emperor himself, Mark displays his victory over the most exalted ruler in the world and the empire that encompassed the known world. The Messiah's victory over the emperor thus points beyond itself to God's total victory through the Messiah. That is to say, the Gospel is more about Jesus's victory than Caesar's defeat; but, the effective supplanting of even Caesar demonstrates the fullness of Jesus's victory.

Mark's purpose, then, is not as simple as only to proffer Jesus as a counter-emperor (so, Peppard), or to pit Jesus's résumé against that of a particular Roman emperor (Winn).³⁶⁵ Nor is Mark merely responding to "the stressful situation" of Mark's audience in Rome or elsewhere (Brian Incigneri), or to "the challenge that the early Christians faced in holding and propagating their faith in the face of opposition and competition" (Evans) (though, doubtless, Mark's portrayal of Jesus's victory over Rome would have provided encouragement—perhaps much needed encouragement—for believers living under Roman rule).³⁶⁶ There is perhaps a grain of truth in each of these suggestions; but if the observed *inclusio* of 1:10–11 / 15:38–39 is any indicator, then Mark's ultimate purpose is to portray the victorious enthronement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—and this, it may be reasoned, is the content of his εὐαγγέλιον.

For readers of Mark today, then, the Gospel continues to proclaim a victory and simultaneously a critique. Inasmuch as the victory claimed over Rome relates to a total victory of cosmic proportions, so not only Rome, but all oppressors for all time that wield their power in similar fashion, through the sort of conquest and

365. Peppard, *Son of God*, 87; Winn, *Purpose*, 201.

366. Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: the Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 2; Evans, *Mark*, lxxxii; I personally follow Hengel, (*Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, 23–24) in positing the Neronian persecutions as the probable *Sitz im Leben* of Mark, though my thesis is not dependent on any particular date or provenance of the Gospel.

terror represented by the cross, stand not only critiqued, but judged and (in actuality) overcome. The victory continually belongs to God through his Son, Jesus, the Messiah, and so also to all who belong to him.

What, then, does it finally mean to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God? I do not propose to give a complete answer to that question here, but only to answer what it means to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God by way of the Gospel of Mark. In keeping with Mark, however, to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God is to proclaim his enthronement as God's King and his victory over every power: it is to proclaim him as the one through whom the raging of the nations will be stilled and in whom the hope of God's people will be realized. It is a shorthand for the gospel itself. This is the sonship which drives Mark's own Gospel from the beginning, the sonship into which Jesus is anointed at his baptism, and the sonship which is fully realized through Jesus's death on the cross; and the proclamation of this sonship, I would suggest, ought to occupy a central place in Christian worship and in the continuing proclamation of the gospel.

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APPENDIX A: THE AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND PROVENANCE OF MARK

The Second Gospel is attributed to "Mark" both by unanimous church tradition and by its title, KATA MAPKON. Despite the misgivings of some scholars who argue that this title was a later addition to the text, A. Y. Collins has argued persuasively that the title is probably original to text, pointing out that if this work had ever circulated without a title, it "would likely have acquired two or more different ones in transmission," which does not seem to have occurred.³⁶⁷ The early Christian sources are again unanimous in associating Mark with Peter, beginning with the testimony of Papias reported by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15), who states that Mark became Peter's (ἐρμηνευτῆς) and based his work on what he remembered from Peter's discourses. Nevertheless, some scholars believe that the traditional linkage to Peter depends entirely on Papias, whose own reliability Marcus questions on the basis of other apparent non-Petrine traditions present in Mark.³⁶⁸ The majority of scholars, however, are less skeptical of the tradition.³⁶⁹

The second question regarding the author is whether this Mark is in fact the John Mark of Scripture (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 25:37-39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phil 24; 1 Pet 5:13). Scholars are again divided over this question. Marcus notes that Mark was one of the most common names in the Roman Empire and finds this possibility unlikely; yet, upon careful consideration of several of the passages noted above,

367. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 2-3. See also the agreements of Hengel, *Studies*, 74-84; idem., *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (Harrisburg, 2000), 50-56; R. H. Stein, *Mark*, 2-3; *contra* Marcus, *Mark* 1-8, 17-18; Edwards, *Mark*, 3; Moloney, *Mark* (2002), 11.

368. Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark," *JBL* (1992): 442-43; Boring, *Mark*, 18; cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 236; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 38-40.

369. These include Adolf von Harnack, (*The Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1911], 129) who holds that the various accounts are indeed one and the same, but, even so, finds no reason to mistrust this tradition; Lane, (*Mark*, 8-12) who identifies close parallels between the themes of Peter's preaching in Acts 10 and Mark's Gospel; J. A. T. Robinson, (*Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1976], 115-116) who characterizes the skepticism toward this tradition as "excessive"; Hengel, (*Studies*, 1-6; 64-84) who especially argues for the reliability of the patristic evidence; Gundry, *Mark*, 1029-034, also defending patristic tradition; and more recently France, *Mark*, 7, 37-39; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 4; Stein, *Mark*, 2-4.

Collins finds this identification probable.³⁷⁰ Ultimately, I have referred to the author as "Mark" throughout, but these questions of authorship have little bearing upon this thesis.

A long history of interpretation has espoused that Mark was written from Rome in the mid to late 60s, and this position is still maintained by the majority of scholars today.³⁷¹ As a variation of this view, some scholars have also proposed an early date in the 50s (from Rome) based on the ending of Acts.³⁷² Yet, a growing contingent of scholars has argued instead for a Syrian provenance.³⁷³ Only a few scholars argue for a Galilean provenance, which is generally considered highly unlikely due to the absence of any sizable Christian community there during this time frame.³⁷⁴ A brief discussion of the internal and external evidence is in order.

In accordance with the testimony of Papias above, the anti-Marcionite prologue to Mark and Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.1.1) both claim that Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome after Peter's "departure" (ἐξοδος).³⁷⁵ While a few scholars have argued that ἐξοδος may refer to Peter's literal departure from Rome rather than his death, Hengel observes that ἐξοδος was a common term for referring to a person's death in early Christian literature, thus supporting the position that Mark wrote after Peter's

370. Marcus, "Jewish": 443; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 4–6.

371. Cranfield, *Mark*, 8; Johnson, *Mark*, 16; Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (3rd ed.; THKNT 2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlag, 1965), 18–20; V. Taylor, *Mark*, 31–32; Lane, *Mark*, 12–16; Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1:12–14; R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 191–97; Hengel, *Studies*, 23–29; C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, ABC (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 76; Guelich, *Mark*, xxix; Evans, *Mark*, lxiii, lxxxi–xciii; Witherington, *Mark*, 21; Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 42; Edwards, *Mark*, 7–10; France, *Mark*, 37–41, mostly concurs, but argues for a date no later than the early 60s during Peter's lifetime; Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, passim; though less certain on the dating, also Stein, *Mark*, 4–15.

372. Harnack, *Date*, 126–33.

373. S. Schulz, *Die Stunde der Botschaft: Einführung in die Theologie der vier Evangelisten* (Hamburg: Furche, 1967), 9; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 97–98; H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 100–05; H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 2.166–67; P. J. Achtemeier, *Mark* (2nd ed.; Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 125–31; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 236–51; Marcus, "Jewish": passim; idem., *Mark*, 30–35; Moloney, *Mark* (2002), 15, Boring, *Mark*, 20.

374. See A. Y. Collins, (*Mark*, 100–01) regarding this theory and the problems with it.

375. An additional early reference also appears in Justin, *Dial.*, 106.3.

death (believed to have occurred in the Neronian persecution around AD 64/5).³⁷⁶

Clement of Alexandria and Origen also claim the Mark wrote from Rome, but state that he did so before Peter's death (*Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1–2; 6.14.6–7; 6.25.5). This discrepancy is probably best explained by an increasing tendency among the church fathers to strengthen the Gospel's association with Peter over time.³⁷⁷ Thus, if tradition is to be taken at face value, the best evidence points toward a Roman provenance sometime after AD 64. Where Markan priority is accepted, the *terminus ad quem* can be set no later than AD 75.³⁷⁸

One of the earliest challenges to this tradition was posited by Adolf von Harnack, who worked backwards from the dating of Acts. Harnack finds it unimaginable that Luke, after keeping his readers "intensely interested in the progress of the trial of St Paul" for eight chapters, would "completely disappoint them" by ending Acts as he does in 28:30–31.³⁷⁹ The logical explanation, then, is that Luke finished Acts before the end of Paul's trial and/or death, meaning prior to AD 64. Supposing, however, that Luke was indeed written before Acts and Mark before Luke, Harnack concludes that Mark is better dated to the 50s rather than 60s. This argument has since been echoed by John A. T. Robinson (who suggests a possible date anywhere between AD 45–60 for Mark) and more recently by John Wenham.³⁸⁰ This argument is all too often swept aside without due consideration; nevertheless,

376. France, (*Mark*, 37) argues that this is the case of the basis of the wording of this same tradition in Ephraem's commentary on the *Diatessaron* (*cum abiisset Romam*), which "refers to relocation rather than death."; Hengel, *Studies*, 2.

377. Cranfield, *Mark*, 5; Hengel, *Studies*, 4; Guelich, *Mark*, xxvi; Edwards, *Mark*, 7; A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 4, 7; Stein, *Mark*, 13; though one cannot definitively rule out the possibility that Clement and Origen are correct and that the earlier tradition was either mistaken, or not referring to Peter's death at all (as France would suggest).

378. Cranfield, *Mark*, 7, gives a *terminus ad quem* of AD 70, though his grounds for this are not clear; Hengel, *Studies*, 7.

379. Harnack, *Date*, 95.

380. Robinson, *Redating*, 88–116, posits other arguments for an earlier dating as well, including a re-analysis of the synoptic problem; John Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 225. Gundry, *Mark*, 1029–042, also argues for a date in the mid 50s.

there are inherent weaknesses in it. As Stein points out, Acts is not a biography of Paul: the purpose of Acts is rather to chronicle the spread of the gospel throughout the world, even to the capital of the Roman Empire itself. Thus, "when Paul has fulfilled his mission in bringing the gospel to the end of the earth (9:28–28:31) by preaching it in Rome to Caesar himself, Luke ends Acts."³⁸¹ Ultimately, this scheme rests on too many unproven variables, and the date of Mark's Gospel is better established on the basis of tradition and internal evidence.

On the one hand, Hengel has pointed out a number of features in the text that seem to suggest a Roman provenance in the late 60s. These include Mark's emphasis upon a world-wide Gentile mission (13:10; 14:9), which he reasons to fit better with the character of Christianity in the 60s rather than an earlier time period.³⁸² Hengel further argues that this emphasis points to the fact that Mark was written for Gentile Christians, which would not have existed in large numbers until after the Pauline mission.³⁸³ Additionally, the emphasis upon persecution and suffering may well indicate the Neronian persecution as the probable *Sitz im Leben* of Mark—a point which will be revisited shortly.³⁸⁴ Other features noted by Hengel include the presence of translated Aramaic and Hebrew words for a presumably Gentile audience (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22), several latinisms which are taken to suggest a Roman audience (4:21; 5:9, 15; 6:27, 37; 12:14; 15:16, 39, 44), and Mark's use of the term Syrophoenician rather than simply Phoenician in 7:26.³⁸⁵ Additionally, several scholars cite Mark's explanations of Jewish customs (7:3–4; 12:18; 14:12; 15:42) as evidence that wrote for a largely Gentile community some distance from

381. Stein, *Mark*, 13.

382. Hengel, *Studies*, 12–13.

383. Hengel, *Studies*, 12–13.

384. Hengel, *Studies*, 23–24.

385. Hengel, (*Studies*, 46) even states, "I do not know of any other work in Greek which has as many Aramaic or Hebrew words and formulae in so narrow a space as does the second Gospel." See also Cranfield, *Mark*, 8; Hurtado, *Mark*, 6; Edwards, *Mark*, 10; France, *Mark*, 41; Witherington, *Mark*, 20–21; Icnigieri, (*The Gospel to the Romans*, 101) on the latinisms specifically.

Palestine.³⁸⁶

Hengel's claim regarding the latinisms in Mark has, however, been challenged by Gerd Theissen and Marcus, who independently argue that most of these Latin words are technical military terms that "could occur at any place where a Roman garrison was stationed and Roman law was practiced."³⁸⁷ Theissen further argues that Mark's explanation of two λεπτά as equal to a *quadrans* (12:42) may be understood by the fact that *quadrans* had become proverbial for the minimum unit of money, while Marcus similarly reasons that this usage should not be thought of as "the conversion of an eastern term into its western equivalent," but as the clarification of an "unspecific or unfamiliar" term with a more specific, more familiar one.³⁸⁸ Yet, this argument implies that *quadrans* was a *more familiar* term to Mark's audience than λεπτά δύο. Thus, Theissen and Marcus's arguments are strong, though Hengel's argument is still not altogether implausible.³⁸⁹ Witherington, for one, has not found these counterarguments entirely persuasive.³⁹⁰

Mark's translation of Aramaic and Hebrew terms and explanations of Jewish customs have never been contended with very seriously, however. Collins believes the citations of Aramaic words could be taken as evidence for either a Roman or Syrian provenance, since it is "a sign that the author and at least some members of his audience knew Aramaic as well as Greek."³⁹¹ If all of Mark's audience also knew Greek, however, it is still not clear from Collins' argument why these Aramaic words

³⁸⁶ Cranfield, *Mark*, 8; Hurtado, *Mark*, 6; Edwards, *Mark*, 10.

³⁸⁷ Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 248; Marcus, "Jewish": 444. Quotation from Marcus, "Jewish": 444.

³⁸⁸ Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 248; Marcus, "Jewish": 444. Quotation from Marcus, "Jewish": 444 again, though "unspecific and unfamiliar" are K. Butcher's terms quoted by Marcus; see also the agreement of A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 9.

³⁸⁹ Theissen, (*Gospels in Context*, 245–47) similarly casts doubt on Hengel's argument regarding the term Συροφονικισσα in 7:26, demonstrating that this term could have made equal sense in a Syrian context as in a Roman context; see also Marcus, "Jewish": 445–46; idem., *Mark*, 30–31.

³⁹⁰ Witherington, *Mark*, 20–21, agrees that the military terms could have been found anywhere in the Empire, but still finds the latinisms in 12:42; 15:16, 46 much harder to explain.

³⁹¹ A. Y. Collins, (*Mark*, 8) admits that the author and some members of his audience could certainly have come from Palestine or Syria.

should be included at all; in other words, it does not necessarily follow that some of Mark's audience knew Aramaic, and the translations of these terms still overwhelmingly suggests an audience unfamiliar with them. Such is Witherington's position also: while Mark knows Aramaic, his audience seemingly does not.³⁹²

The primary argument for a Syrian provenance, meanwhile, concerns the reading of Mark 13. Marcus and Theissen have proffered formidable arguments that the second Jewish War (AD 66-74) is the probable *Sitz im Leben* of Mark's Gospel, which was written in fairly close geographic proximity to those events. These arguments are based on the supposition that the apocalyptic discourses of chap. 13 seem to mirror the events of that conflict.³⁹³ Marcus, along with Theissen, reads the various prophecies throughout this chapter as *vatينيا ex eventu*, pointing specifically to the destruction of the temple (13:2), and to the reference to wars and persecution in 13:6-16, and follows Pesch's assessment that Mark's description of the temple's destruction in particular corresponds to Josephus' account (*JW* 7.1.1 §1-4).³⁹⁴ Marcus also notes that while earthquakes (13:8) were not unique to this time period, "there were at least two enormous earthquakes in the 60s—60 and 63" according to Tacitus (*Annals* 14:27).³⁹⁵

Yet, A. Y. Collins points out that in fact, 13:2 historically was *not* precisely fulfilled: some stones were still left on top of one another. As Collins argues, this rather suggests that the prediction of the temple's destruction was not written out of the event; for in that case, Mark would likely have taken care to make it correspond to the exact historical details of the matter.³⁹⁶ Collins further argues that the

392. Witherington, *Mark*, 20.

393. Marcus, "Jewish": 446–62; idem., *Mark 1–8*, 33–39; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 258–80.

394. Marcus, "Jewish": 446–48; cf. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2:271; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 259, 271.

395. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 30.

396. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 11; cf. Edwards, (*Mark*, 8): "If Mark knew of the fall of Jerusalem, one would expect a more obvious correlation with the Roman siege, as is apparent in Luke 21:20–24, for example."

language of Mark 13 represents "standard apocalyptic fare," such that there is no necessary reason to assume that any of these prophecies are *ex eventu*.³⁹⁷ Stein concurs, noting that "'[w]ars and reports of wars' is a common apocalyptic idea found in judgment prophecies and descriptions of the end times and the 'birth pangs' of the messianic age."³⁹⁸ In a similar vein, Hengel and Larry Hurtado both point out that the advice given in 13:14 to "flee to the mountains," is ironic given the historical events of the Jewish War: people rather fled *into* the city from the mountains and hills because these had already been occupied by the Romans. As Hengel writes, such advice would have seemed "nonsensical" to an audience who had lived through those events.³⁹⁹ Thus, all matters considered, Mark 13 appears to support a *Sitz im Leben* some geographic distance from the Jewish War at a time most likely prior to the Temple's destruction in 70.

Nevertheless, the apocalyptic discourses of Mark 13 do speak of intense persecution and suffering. As Hengel points out, "Mark is the first person in the New Testament to speak in this way of the universal hatred of Christians."⁴⁰⁰ Although Marcus and Stein both note that other persecutions took place before and after the Neronian persecution following the great fire of AD 64, Hengel again states that "We know of no comparable persecution in the forty years before and the hundred after"; persecution of this scale did not take place prior to 64.⁴⁰¹ Thus, I conclude that Mark most likely wrote from Rome to a Roman audience sometime in the probable *Sitz im Leben* of the Neronian persecution.

397. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 11–12.

398. Stein, *Mark*, 14–15. See also Hengel, *Studies*, 15., threats against the temple itself began "as early as in Ps. 74" and continued during the Second Temple period; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 30, himself notes that this is the case.

399. Hengel, *Studies*, 16–17; Hurtado, *Mark*, 7.

400. Hengel, *Studies*, 23.

401. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 31–32; Stein, *Mark*, 14; Hengel, *Studies*, 23; in agreement with Hengel, see Robinson, *Redating*, 115; Lane, *Mark*, 12–16; Edwards, *Mark*, 7.

APPENDIX B: THE INTERTEXTUAL LINES OF INFLUENCE IN MARK 1:10-11

Mark 1:10-11

καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαῖναν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν [σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανούς] καὶ [τὸ πνεῦμα (ὡς περιστερὰν) καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν] καὶ φωνή ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν [σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου] [ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα].

Early Jewish Literature

Mek. Exod. 19:20; S. Eli. Rab. 30[28]; T. Lev. 18:6-7; T. Jud. 24:1-6 S. Eli. Rab. 4; Mek. Exod. 14:13; IQH^a Midr. Ps. 2:9 4Q174; 4Q246; 1Q28^a; Pss. Sol. 17; Sib. Or. 3; 4 Ezra 7, 13-14; 1 En 37-71

Old Testament Backgrounds

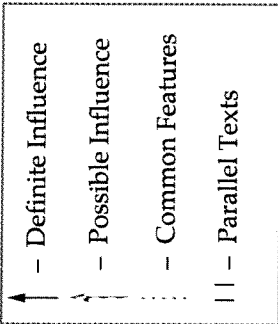
Isa 63:19 LXX (63-64)

Isa 11

Ps 89 || Ps 2:7

Isa 42:1

2 Sam 7:14



APPENDIX C: COMMON FLOW OF MARK 1:10–11 / 15:38–39

Event:

1:10: καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανούς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν

15:38: Καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω.

Introduction of Speaker:

1:11a: καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν·

15:39a: ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκώς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν·

Climactic Pronouncement About Jesus:

1:11b: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

15:38b: ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

VITA

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